***La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) and *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE) Online and On-the-Ground: Representational Choices and Indigenous Media Sovereignty**

by

Elizabeth Hagestedt

B.A., University of Oregon, United States, 2008

M.A., University of Durham, England, 2011

Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, University of Victoria, 2015

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Anthropology

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University of Victoria

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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier, Department of Anthropology
Supervisor

Dr. Brian Thom, Department of Anthropology
Departmental Member

Dr. José Antonio Lucero, Jackson School of International Studies, Chair of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Washington
Outside Member

Abstract

The development of new Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) has influenced all aspects of communication and representation, altering the ways in which humans interact on a daily basis. Within politics and rights activism, where many issues overlap and representational needs develop and change from one day to the next, these changes are particularly noteworthy. The use of ICTs, particularly social media and mobile technologies, has been widespread in popular protests around the world, and has become an effective aid in the organizing and implementing of large-scale rights campaigns. Indigenous organizations in Ecuador, like those in other parts of the world, have actively adopted new ICTs as they have become available, utilizing websites, social media and mobile applications to connect with members and supporters. Using these technologies requires careful consideration of a wide range of issues, however, such as best practices to ensure inclusive representation, how to overcome infrastructure challenges, how to develop skills for creating high quality media, and how to control and shape messaging through social media. This dissertation analyzes the example of two of these organizations, *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) and *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE), each of which represents a large number of Indigenous peoples through a carefully developed communications plan. While firmly based in anthropological literature on representation and media sovereignty, this work pulls from a wide range of disciplines, including Latin American organizational and communications scholars. Drawing from two fieldwork trips to Ecuador from September 2016 to February 2017 and October to December 2017, as well as data collection conducted online throughout that time period, this research takes a broad approach that combines traditional ethnographic, participatory, visual and digital methodologies. These diverse methods led to the development of a broad work with many interwoven layers, which includes chapters examining online communication structure, the example of a social media campaign, discussion of networking, and the relationship between online and on-the-ground actions. The visual and participatory methodologies led to a chapter discussing the development of a series of photovoice workshops with CONFENIAE, which provided an opportunity for the organization to increase the photography skills of their members and begin the creation of an online communication team. Through these various threads, this dissertation

broadly examines the representational choices that CONAIE and CONFENIAE make in the course of developing their communication plans, including the ways that websites and social media can be used to supplement campaigns while remaining anchored in on-the-ground actions.

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radio), and Café Democratico (a café/bar space in Quito); Media: Tegantai (news association focused on ecology), Wambra Radio, MICC Radio, and Radio FACSO. While this is not a complete list it helps to identify some of the participants in the network that organizes these events, of particular interest is the funding that they receive from Europe, which reflects some of the wider networks that CONAIE has developed over time, page 186

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Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Indigenous organizations, CONAIE and CONFENIAE, that I worked with during this research. While there were moments of awkwardness while I learned how my research productively fit within the goals of the organizations, the warmth and interest of individuals made that process much less difficult. I would particularly like to thank Andrés Tapía and Apawki Castro for their help throughout my research, and for allowing me to participate in the events and daily life of CONFENIAE. I would also like to thank all of the participants of my photography workshops for their passion for photography and for allowing me to use their images and words.

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier for her incredible dedication to this project. Her endless support, advice and interest helped me to push this project to its fullest potential. I am also grateful to my committee members Dr. Brian Thom and Dr. José Antonio Lucero for their hard work, particularly throughout the editing process. Their thoughtful and insightful comments were essential to developing my arguments.

I would like to thank my partner, Patrick Sonstroem, for his boundless emotional support, as well as his technical support in the use of Microsoft Power BI for analysis and visualization of my online data.

I would not have been able to complete this work without the support of a large number of people. The many graduate students in the Anthropology department and my cohort from the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LATHE) program kept me sane. The Anthropology Secretaries, Jindra Belanger and Cathy Rzeplinski, kept me on track in all sorts of ways over the years, always making sure nothing was missed. I would also like to thank my Mom for her emotional support throughout this process, including the incredibly frequent FaceTime calls while I pushed to finish this project during a global pandemic.

Finally, thanks you to University of Victoria's Centre for Youth and Society (CfYS) for the Freya Milne Memorial Scholarship that enabled me to create the Photovoice workshops with

CONFENIAE. My work would have been much less impactful without it. Also, for the broader funding that allowed me to pursue this PhD in the first place, I would like to thank

Dedication

This dissertation is in honor of my parents, who have supported my every dream… even if they sometimes make you sigh in exasperation.

And also for Patrick, who knew what he was getting himself into and still decided to come with me on my journey.

Prologue

"Well," I said, shrugging as I raised my voice to be heard over the music, "I focus on how Indigenous organizations use online communication methods, like what they choose to put on social media." The bar in Calgary was packed, and all of my partner's co-workers were jammed into one corner for after-work drinks, I was meeting most of them for the first time and I ended up explaining my research project to each of them in turn. The woman across from me smiled, and said, "That sounds so interesting. What are they putting online then?" I hesitated a bit, then started to explain more, "I look at political representation, so I examine a lot of campaigns for Indigenous rights." The woman's face brightens as she exclaims, "Wow, would I know about any of the stuff you're looking at?" I took a breath, "My work is with two organizations in Ecuador, do you know much about South American politics?" The woman paused with a blank look on her face. "Um, not much. So, Indigenous people have the Internet in Ecuador?"

Every doctoral candidate has a short description of their work, often called their "elevator speech," to offer when inevitably asked by the general public, "Oh, wow, you're doing a PhD? What do you study?" Mine typically introduces the various threads of the work that I do gradually to give people a chance to ask me the basic questions that develop as I progress through the explanation. As I begin to describe my research in a bit more detail the looks shift from interest into confusion, and people often ask me why I chose those specific Indigenous organizations in Ecuador for my research when I am attending a university in Canada.

Before I began my PhD, I had never visited Ecuador, though I did speak Spanish and had travelled in South America. My interest in rights-based movements began by watching the drama of the Zapatista movement unfold in Mexico, paralleling my years studying Spanish. By the time I reached university and paired anthropology and Spanish as dual majors, the Zapatista movement had become one of the classic examples of Indigenous rights organizations effectively using media to advocate for and claim their rights. The importance of identity and the growing

recognition of the need for equal rights, including the rights of Indigenous peoples[1] have inspired an increasing number of movements and organizations for the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. During my Master's degree I chose to focus on the online representational strategies of Indigenous rights organizations throughout South America, completing a comparison of the online representation of organizations from Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador. I have continued with this work in an attempt to examine the changing role of representation for claiming rights in a complex media world, taking the opportunity to focus on the Ecuadorian organization that was most actively using online communication methods within the context of my Master's research. What I build towards in dialogue with the people who I give my elevator speech to is an understanding that Indigenous peoples' online communication strategies are not always impactful for their attempts to claim rights, but analyzing examples can help to determine what types of representation have an impact and what that impact might be.

[1] The United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted in 2007, when I was an undergraduate in anthropology at the University of Oregon. More details about UNDRIP can be found here: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

Chapter 1: Introduction

I sat with CONFENIAE's Communication Director, Andrés Tapía, in a café in Puyo, both of us scrolling through our phones as we looked through the photos, we had each taken at the latest training event. "Pienso que esta foto es muy interestante…" I say as I ponder which image is best for the online posts about the next workshop.[2] *"No, creo que necesitamos una foto que muestra a más participantes, especialmente a una mujer." Andrés was very thoughtful in his choice of the images that he posted online for the organization, always looking for as many options as possible and considering them carefully before deciding. This was not the first time that he had requested photos from me, in fact I had sent all of the photos that I took during every event to him in case there was something useful to the organization. I was also not the only one, some of the photos that he was showing me as options I had already seen, taken by friends who had shown me their best shots after the event. We continued quietly for a couple of minutes before Andrés triumphantly announced, "Esta foto funcionará," turning his phone to show me the image of a group of Indigenous men and women together, gathered around a camera and pointing at the screen.*

This vignette highlights many of the issues that are most relevant to this work—those of representational choices being made by Indigenous organizations, the forms that constrain or provide allowances for these choices, and the ways these forms interact. The large organizations that I worked with during this research were very aware of the ways that Indigenous people are represented in media, and the ways that they could influence that representation, particularly through their own media sovereignty. This savvy use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) reflects a strongly developed reflective practice on the role of media in social change, and how to best leverage media within a complex political landscape.

This introductory chapter provides some of the essential background of the research project, orienting the reader by presenting the theoretical frameworks that helped to structure this work, as well as a description of the field and research methods used during the data collection.

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[2] The Spanish translates to a discussion about the photos that we were viewing: "I think this photo is interesting..." "No, I think we need a photo that shows more participants, especially a woman." "This photo will work."

Theoretical Frameworks

This thesis seeks to examine the relationships between power, identity, and representation, requiring a wide range of scholarship for its theoretical grounding. Pulling from the work of a wide range of scholars, including communication and media scholars, political scientists, women's studies scholars, and many others, each area of study has provided insights and examples that I have drawn from. The main approach of this work, however, is based in anthropological methods and theory. The focus on ethnographically based methods, outlined in the research methods section below, provides the foundations of this research.

Forms

At its core, this dissertation is an investigation into various forms and the ways in which these forms interact. As outlined by the literary scholar Caroline Levine (2015, 6-11), forms are organizational structures which each present certain affordances, either allowing or preventing specific behaviors. Different social media platforms, for example, allow and restrict in different ways. Twitter's 280-character limit prevents users from sharing long stories in a single post, while Pinterest emphasizes visual organization patterns. Levine identified four main types of forms, including wholes, rhythms, hierarchies and networks.[3] Each of these types provides a different organizational structure, but no single form functions in isolation so that "in practice, we encounter so many forms that even in the most ordinary daily experience they add up to a complex environment composed of multiple and conflicting modes of organization" (Levine 2015, 16). This dissertation tries to break down some of the forms at play in the communication structures of Indigenous rights organizations, considering the ways various forms interact and influence one another. As Levine highlights, the ways in which forms overlap and contradict provides spaces for productive change to happen, making these intersections interesting opportunities for organizations to seek out (2015).

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[3] Each of these types of forms can be clarified with specific examples: wholes are often described as something bounded, such as a country is contained within borders; rhythms can best be thought of as structures that maintain or repeat over time, many of these examples are biological such as reproduction or aging, but examples such as the steps followed by a legal trial or the election cycle are more productive examples for this research; examples of hierarchies are fairly easy to think of, including the structure of most companies, but also problematic social structures like race and gender; finally networks can be seen in everything from kinship to international trade, and are directly applicable within this research, where social media and support networks are heavily discussed within the later chapters (Levine 2015).

Representation and Indigenous media sovereignty

The Cambridge Dictionary defines representation as both the process and the media creations through which "a person or organization […] speaks, acts, or is officially present for someone else" (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Within the context of my research on Indigenous organizations, representation includes the choices made of how to frame information, which pieces to include on websites and social media, and which Indigenous peoples are receiving the focus of media. Representation deals not only with the media being created, but whose opinions and objectives are being included in the media.

Representation has attracted a lot of attention in anthropology, inspiring intense debates about the role of the anthropologist. Throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries anthropology has experienced what many scholars refer to as a "crisis of representation," questioning the ability of the discipline to objectively represent the Indigenous peoples with whom we work and the tendency to represent Indigenous cultures as "exotic" or "other" (Crapanzano 1986; Said 1985; Fabian 1990, 2006). Indigenous scholars were also vocal in their criticism of anthropologists' representation of Indigenous peoples, such as Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr.'s famous criticism of anthropologists and their research questions in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969). This debate has resulted in a number of responses from academics, including greater reflexivity,[4] a shift to include more direct participation and collaboration with research participants,[5] and an increased focus on Indigenous representations and media creation. Collaboration privileges the voice of research participants, placing their insights and knowledge foremost in the work. As a white settler researcher in a region where I am an outsider, I worked hard to ensure that I was providing as much opportunity for the voice of my research participants as possible. Since this project was heavily visual, that has partially been accomplished by including participants' photos with their full authorization and the comments made about their photos. I also use my own voice heavily throughout the dissertation as a counterpoint to help

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[4] As advocated by researchers such as the feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), increased reflexivity requires researchers to consider how their own background and experiences are influencing the conclusions they draw from their data.

[5] Discussed in detail within *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* by Luke Lassiter (2005).

identify my own presence and position as a researcher and the way that that role may have impacted the conclusions that I reached through this research.

The work of media anthropologists such as Faye Ginsberg and Terence Turner has provided examples of research that analyzes media representations developed directly by Indigenous peoples. Ginsberg's work about Indigenous film projects focuses on the creation, distribution, and consumption of Indigenous-created media (1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2011). Turner's work with the Kayapo similarly emphasizes Indigenous aesthetics and use of video (1991, 1992, 2002). Control of the means of media creation and distribution provide opportunities to support self-determination efforts for Indigenous peoples, or what has been determined "visual sovereignty" by the Seneca media scholar Michelle Raheja (2010, 2013). Visual media provides opportunities for Indigenous peoples to break down stereotypes and to improve the strength of their communities. The concept of visual sovereignty makes use of mass media, while re-articulating self-representation and autonomy through "a practice that takes a holistic approach to the process of creating moving images and that locates Indigenous cinema in a particular historical and social context while privileging tribal specificity" (Raheja 2010, 192). Sometimes research projects have included academics' collaborative participation in representation efforts, and the move away from traditional products of research has also been discussed as a way in which anthropologists can position themselves as contributing positively to consultant communities (Beck and Maida 2013, 8). My own research is heavily positioned within these understandings of media sovereignty, focusing on the ways that Indigenous organizations are already using media, the ways they are adapting to new media, and the limitations that a lack of access to technological advancements place on their communications plans. While I ended up offering training in photography to members of one of the organizations during the research (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 7), this training plan was highly collaborative, and I tried to emphasize the needs and perspectives of the organization when designing and implementing the training.

Research into media, including understandings of how social media is increasingly intertwined with other aspects of daily life, has been well developed by scholars such as Daniel Miller (Miller et al. 2016). Miller's understanding of the continuum of behavior from online to in-person interactions is essential for any scholarship on media and representation. My own work

looks closely at the relationships between online representational practices of Indigenous organizations and the events that are held with groups of various sizes on-the-ground. These interactions between online and on-the-ground were some of the most productive in terms of creating materials and inspiring further participation. As events like large protests progressed, participants would post comments and photos online, which would receive comments from people not at the protest, and would then be answered by the participants in the moment during the event, creating a cyclical interaction between online and on-the-ground communication. Isolating these two behaviors draws an artificial barrier between these two forms, effectively obscuring the interactions. Other disciplines have been instrumental in the development of research on relationships between protest campaigns and online networking as well, providing insights into the effective uses of social media for organizing protests.[6]

Framing Communication, Framing Organization

Communication is a complex process, including a variety of layered and intertwined activities that are intended to accomplish different things, and that rely on various forms to dictate how they function. The organizations create an interwoven tapestry from which I have sought to unpick some of the knotted threads, attempting to understand how online communication is connected to local communication methods, and how these connect with actions taken on-the-ground. The organizations can be conceptualized through the form of a complex and interwoven network then, with a series of overlaid interests and allegiances in the form of wholes, rhythms, hierarchies and competing or complementary networks.

My ideas of communication practices are informed by Latin Americanist scholarship around conceptions of cultural citizenship, cultural hybridization, and cultural agency. These three ideas can help to inform media practices, providing a forum where they are publicly demonstrated. The first of these ideas, cultural citizenship, is used by the Cultural Studies scholars such as Néstor García Canclini to emphasize the way that diverse groups can come together to form a unified

[6] For example, the Idle No More movement in Canada (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014) or the democratization movements of the Arab Spring (Tufekci 2017). Pascal Lupien (2020) provides insights specifically tailored to the Latin American Indigenous use of ICTs for protest, highlighting some of the challenges that organizations have experienced in trying to incorporate social media into their strategies for engagement and mobilization. With difficulties such as a lack of access to technologies, concerns over cybersecurity and insufficient training, organizations face real challenges to successful utilization of ICTs for achieving their goals. These issues receive further consideration in later chapters.

whole when working towards common goals (García Canclini 2018). In the face of increasing disconnection between citizens of the nation-state, who are no longer seen as homogenous and unified wholes, it is smaller groups that find commonality to build more localized organizations that can productively work together (Yúdice 2003). This is evident in the organizations that I work with, and is visibly demonstrated in their use of media to advocate for various Indigenous peoples or to shift between different interest groups. Similar ideas have been developed through criticisms of "the public," identifying challenges to a singular national identity as subaltern counterpublics or micro-publics, which can then coordinate challenges to a unified national identity (Fraser 1990; Keane 1995).[7] García Canclini (1995) has also utilized the idea of cultural hybridization to describe the new creations that emerge from the combination of cultural elements through these acts of cultural citizenship, which can be seen in media in examples such as the visual combination of diverse sources to create memes (as developed further in Chapter 5).

The third of these concepts, cultural agency, is used by scholars like Yúdice (2003), García Canclini (2006) and Jesús Martín Barbero (2006), to highlight the ability of individuals and organizations to strategically use their culture for representation in gaining rights. As Doris Sommer points out, "Culture enables agency. Where structures or conditions can seem intractable, creative practices add dangerous supplements that add angles for intervention and locate room for maneuver" (2006, 3). Related to cultural agency is Yúdice's use of the idea of spectacle to emphasize the power of large-scale events, leveraging cultural agency to highlight demands of rights-based movements (2003).

Narrative and Storytelling

Each of the chapters in this thesis begins with a short narrative vignette. These vignettes serve two main purposes: first, to provide some basic insight into the experience of fieldwork, and second, to provide an accessible introduction related to each chapter. I am doing this to counteract some of the exclusivity inherent in academic texts, which will hopefully make the whole more approachable to non-experts. The inclusion of my ethnographic voice as the author also provides a response to the "crisis of representation" outlined above, incorporating my own

[7] These issues are given further consideration in Chapter 8.

reflexivity into the text of the thesis. I am doing this not only with the written components of the text, but when possible, I also include photos related to each story. The photos help to illustrate the stories that I tell in each of the vignettes, but they also have the function of eliciting my own memories of the fieldwork experience. This use of the visual can help to activate a wider range of sense memories, bringing back tastes, smells, or sounds, and helping to develop a broader range of stories.[8] There are a few vignettes that are not accompanied by photos, either because it was a situation where I was not able to take any or because I took them on a phone which was stolen during my fieldwork before I was able to back them up.

Research Area and Research Questions

Ecuador is small country on the west coast of South America, including the three main regions of the coast, the Andean mountains, and the Amazonian basin. The political climate of Ecuador reflects a long history of colonization and racial inequality for Indigenous peoples. The Ecuadorian government is run as a representative democracy, organized under executive, judiciary and legislative branches with a president acting as the head of state and a National Assembly representing the regional interests of the population. The government functions on a multi-party system, with approximately 20 parties during present elections, one of which is the Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement, which represents Indigenous interests (discussed in further detail within Chapter 2). The Ecuadorian constitution was re-written in 2008 to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, such as the recognition of various nationalities within the State structure. Land rights claims also officially received more support within the most recent constitution, however there are numerous conflicts between the Ecuadorian government and Indigenous peoples around extractive industries[9].

[8] Photo elicitation is a method also used with research participants, helping to engage sensory memories that cannot be accessed through purely verbal interviewing methods (Pink 2007).

[9] Many of these issues are discussed in greater detail throughout the following chapters, particularly within Chapter 2.

Figure 1.1. Map of Ecuador, showing locations of Quito and Puyo in relation to the main features of the terrain within the country. Map created by author.

This research was mainly based at two sites within Ecuador, the capital city of Quito and the city of Puyo at the edge of the Amazon, shown in the map in Figure 1.1. As the capital of the country, Quito is also one of the main population centers of the country, with a population of 2 million in 2020, with a density of 5,400/km^2. The city also boasts relatively well-developed infrastructure, with easy access to mobile data, 16 universities as well as numerous libraries and museums, and well-established public transportation, including a subway system that is under construction.

Puyo, despite being the provincial capital of Pastaza, is significantly smaller than Quito, with a population under 50 thousand, with a density of only 420/ km^2.[10] Infrastructure in Puyo is much more basic, with only limited access to mobile data in the region, as can be seen in the map in Figure 2. Transportation between Quito and Puyo, as well as among the major cities in the region, is reliable, though options within the Amazon become increasingly limited the farther East you travel. Puyo, along with other cities on the Western edge of the Amazon like Baños, Macas, and Tena, acts as a jumping off point for tourism into the Amazonian region and tends to maintain basic levels of infrastructure to support the tourist industry and due to the money it brings in. My work often took me outside of the city of Puyo as well, as one of the organizations that I worked with was located in the small community of Unión Base. This often required me to take a taxi or find a ride from someone in Puyo, as there is no bus service to the community. This also meant that travel between Puyo and Unión Base was often communal, with a taxi being shared by anyone who was in the area.

In order to investigate the research questions that I will outline below, this research broadly focuses on the internal politics of representation and the communication practices of two Indigenous organizations in Ecuador, *La Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) and *La Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE). This research project is based on fieldwork carried out during two trips to Ecuador: the first from October 2016 to February 2017, and the second from October to December 2017. Between these two trips I carried out fieldwork online, examining a range of sources including the main websites of both CONAIE and CONFENIAE, as well as their social media accounts. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube all featured prominently in my work. Using such a wide range of sources in this research allows me to create a more complete picture of the communication practices of these organizations. My analysis concentrates on two specific areas of enquiry: first, the organizations' current online practices; and second, perceptions of those practices from various members of the organizations.

[10] No recent population data is available for Puyo, with the figures from 2010 placing the population at 36,659 within Puyo and 62,016 in the wider metro area. All of the basic facts about Quito and Puyo are available online https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quito; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puyo,_Pastaza

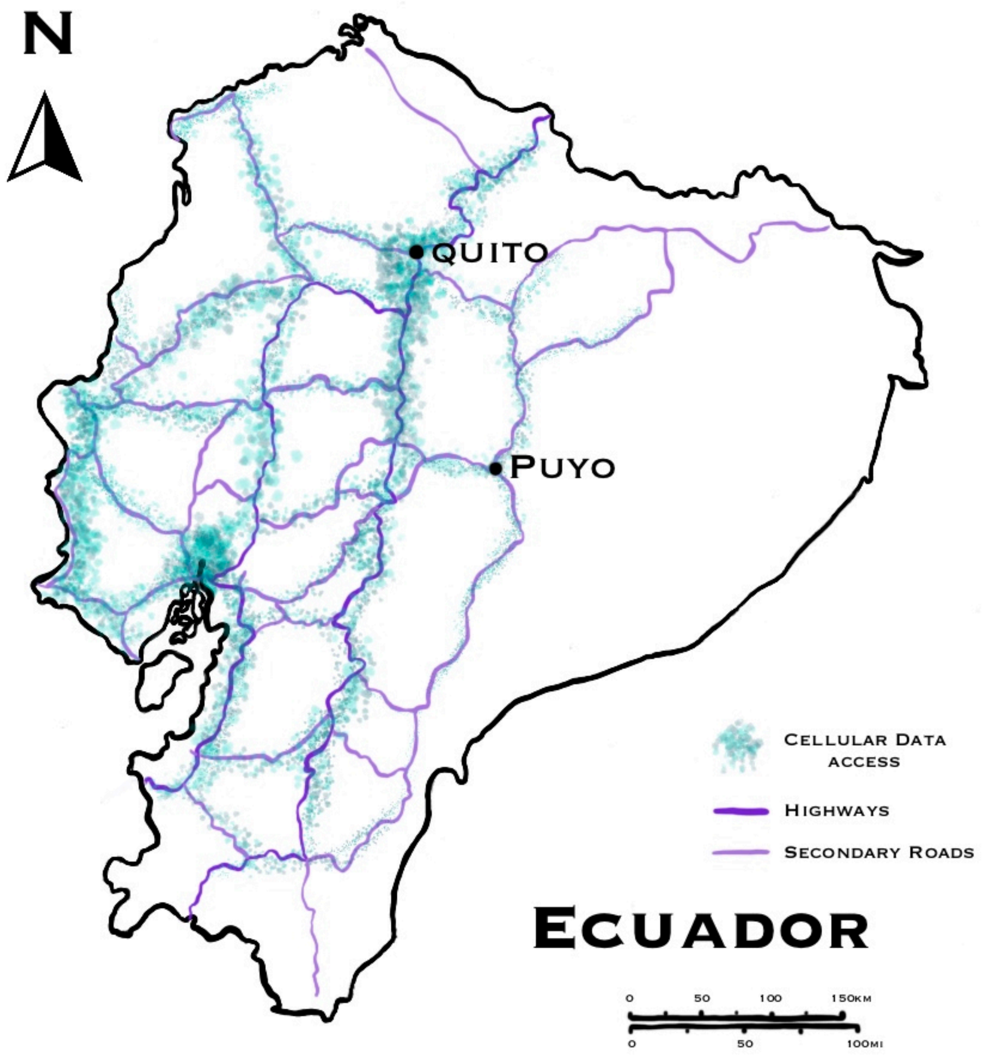

Figure 1.2. Map of Ecuador showing major roads and access to cellular infrastructure. The data that formed the basis of this map was a combination of personal experience and observation, supported by online resources on cellular data coverage within Ecuador. For further information, please see: https://www.nperf.com/en/map/EC/-/-/signal/?ll=-1.691648704756987&lg=-83.60595703125001&zoom=6. Map by author.

Indigenous Media Creation

There is still a limited amount of research considering the role of Indigenous media creation, particularly focusing on ICTs. Much of the research focuses on the development of projects creating representational opportunities, and on the ways in which Indigenous representation is

positioned within the wider media sphere. As Marisa Elena Duarte emphasizes in her dissertation and subsequent book, Network Sovereignty, focusing on the use of ICTs by Native American reservations, there is a significant lack of research around the development and implementation of ICT infrastructures within Indigenous territories, as well as consideration of how these infrastructures then function, with evaluation of successes and challenges, and outcomes within communities (2013, 117; 2017). A consideration of the causal logic for the lack of these infrastructures would help in evaluating how decolonization of ICTs can begin to occur (Duarte 2013, 120; Ginsburg 2006, 129). The implementation of ICT infrastructures in Ecuador is one of the key aspects in understanding representational opportunities available within Indigenous communities. The diverse geography of Ecuador results in a range of accessibility to the Internet for different Indigenous individuals and organizations, with those located in more remote areas, such as the Amazon, experiencing more limited access. The frequent use of mobile technology throughout Ecuador also impacts the access of Indigenous peoples to opportunities to represent themselves online, providing an additional method of connecting to the Internet, particularly social media platforms. These differences in access have an impact on the ability of individuals and organizations to create their own media, the distribution of this access in Ecuador can be seen in Figure 1.2. This lack of access sometimes results in representation being made by people outside of a community, which can be problematic.[11]

Research into Indigenous media use also needs to evaluate the specificities of local situations in order to counter simplistic and universalizing analyses of the challenges faced by Indigenous media development as a whole, and to cultivate a more complex understanding of how projects can be successfully translated for use by other Indigenous peoples and when it is appropriate to do so (Duarte 2013, 118; Niezen 2005, 533). These areas of research demand a note of caution for researchers, as there is often an inclination to examine online communication independently from what is happening on-the-ground in Indigenous communities, as occurred frequently in reference to the Zapatistas. This research project is an examination of the complexity of representational practices; it aims to understand the use of ICTs and social media platforms by

[11] These issues are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Ecuador's Indigenous organizations in a way that can provide insight for other large and diverse organizations.

Beyond technical considerations, one of the most interesting areas of development is Indigenous media autonomy through Web 2.0 access and participatory frameworks. With Indigenous self-representational choices being made in a framework independent of academia, government, and NGO support, researchers can consider Indigenous representational choices the same ways that the representational choices of other groups within society are being investigated. Through the processes of creating media and expanding to an international audience, decisions of what aspects of Indigenous cultures to represent become "a component in political negotiations at both the local and national level" (Jackson 1995: 17). Indigenous media is an area of research that will develop alongside the development of ICTs, with the influence of media consumers beginning to alter and expand potential forms of media through shared creativity and the creative commons. As Salazar points out, it will be interesting to see the cultural impact that Indigenous knowledge could have on IT (2007: 17). One example of this development may be seen as Indigenous peoples continue to address issues surrounding ownership and control of knowledge, such as websites that limit access through digital permissions systems (Ginsburg 2002). It seems clear that these changes will most effectively be seen in ICT projects designed by Indigenous peoples to reflect culturally distinctive needs.

In attempting to examine these broad concepts, this research examines the affordances of different organizational and media forms. I begin with considerations of the affordances of online representation methods, including both the bounded wholes of traditional websites, as well as the networks offered in social media. How can the use of social media and other interactive Web 2.0 utilities provide an avenue for increasing the breadth of representation within large organizations? In what ways does the representation allowed by these ICTs provide opportunities for Indigenous media sovereignty, and what are the limits of those opportunities? How are the voices of diverse organization members incorporated into online representational formats?

While these questions have thus far focused on the online representational forms, this work equivalently considers the relationship between online and on-the-ground representation, asking: How do the forms of events and spaces present opportunities for new interactions and ruptures? What are the value of presence and physicality in representational practices? In answering these questions, I provide examples of two Indigenous organizations' online communication strategies and an analysis of how the various elements contributed to the wider goals of the rights campaigns that they organize. These examples provide insight into what media strategies can be effective for Indigenous organizations around the world.

Terminology

There are a number of terms used throughout this work that are made due to the choices of the participants or due to the specific context of the work. What follows is a small collection of terms that could potentially be considered problematic or that I feel require some explanation. This list is by no means exhaustive, but will hopefully help to clarify the work.

Organizations and Movements

I use the word *organization* when referring to an organized body with explicitly identified leadership that functions as official representation for a group of people (typically multiple nationalities and peoples in this case). I am not the first scholar to make this distinction, and the term social movement organizations (SMOs) has been in use since the 1970s (Davis et al. 2005). On the other hand, I use the term *movement* to describe a looser group of people with no elected officials and which is usually temporally defined – these groups only last as long as they have a unifying cause to draw them together. Typically, a movement will fade from the public view when the cause has been resolved or has decreased in intensity. The alliances created during a movement may or may not be temporary, and the movement may or may not be associated with a single event, such as the construction of a dam. A movement may be coordinated by a single organization and focus on one single struggle, though a movement may also be formed by a conglomeration of various groups working together for a shared goal. Again, I draw from a long history of scholarship in this area, and the distinction was perhaps best expressed by Charles Tilly when he described social movements as "historically specific clusters of political performances" (1993).

Nationalities, Peoples and Communities

I use three terms when talking about the groups of Indigenous individuals who are members of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. The first of these terms, Nationalities, I specifically use when referring to Indigenous peoples who identify themselves as a Nation. Within Ecuador, as in many other parts of the world, Indigenous nationhood has associated claims to sovereignty and land. It is also important to note that *Nacionalidades* is a term that was consciously chosen by Indigenous rights organizers to consciously position Indigenous peoples within the national sphere (Lucero 2003). When I choose not to use the term Nation, it is because a particular group of people may not choose to self-identify with that label or because I am speaking generally about Indigenous groups without a specific example in mind.

I also make a distinction when speaking about Peoples and communities that is not necessarily carried throughout the literature. I use the term People to describe a group of individuals who share cultural traits and identify themselves as belonging to a group, regardless of where they are located geographically. In cases where an Indigenous group does not identify as a Nation, I often choose to use the term Indigenous Peoples to specifically identify that I am speaking about Peoples who have traditional relationships to the land in which they are located that precede colonization.[12] I use the term community to specifically refer to a group of people living in the same area, but who do not necessarily identify as a single cultural group.

It is also important to note the use of the capital I when writing the word Indigenous.[13] While this has not been consistently the case throughout the history of scholarship on Indigenous peoples,

[12] To clarify, the term Peoples is not being used as an equivalent term to the Spanish term *Pueblos*, which has a much more specific connotation to a unified group of a specific size. The relationship between the terms *Nacionalidad* and *Pueblo* is similar to the relationship between the English terms Tribe and Band, wherein a number of bands may fall within the definition of a single Tribe.

[13] The term "Indigenous" has a long and complex history, which I have chosen not to dwell on too closely as it is outside of the scope of my dissertation. It is a preferred identifier for the organizations that I work with, and is prevalent in international rights discourses. The term Indigenous has been used in forums such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) for decades, and continues to be developed through the modification and development of policies. As Ronald Niezen so clearly states, "Indigenous identity, sometimes used to designate the distinctiveness of indigenous societies in the constitutional and moral orders of nation-states, carries significant authority and some degree of power, especially when legally articulated. It is largely an outcome of unintentional cultural and political collaboration. The concept 'indigenous peoples,' developed principally within Western traditions of scholarship and legal reform, has nurtures the revival of 'traditional' identities. It has transcended its symbolic use

particularly in Latin America, and is not necessarily even consistent in current scholarship, I have chosen to use the capital I as best practice in my own work.

Technological Terms

When discussing technology within communication practices I have used a range of different terms that need to be clarified and explained. First, Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) is used as a broad term that can include anything from cell phones and satellite internet connections to standard hardline and Wi-Fi use. This is a term that is often used when specifically discussing the infrastructure associated with online communication practices. When using the terms Internet and online, I am specifically referring to communication through either websites, which present largely unchanging information, or social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which provide opportunities for commenting, re-sharing and other interaction between the original poster and other users.

Choosing a term to indicate interactions that are not taking place through online mediums can be difficult as they tend to create a firm distinction between online and other forms of communication. Since I avoid this division, I choose to use on-the-ground to refer to actions that are occurring with an element of interaction that is not online, which allows for some possibility for communication to also take place contiguously with or to influence online communication.

Research Methods

Fieldwork for this project was completed using a variety of complimentary research methods. Most fundamental to my work while in Ecuador was a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Participant Observation

Participant observation provides greater opportunities for researchers to gain an understanding of local realities through involvement in the daily lives of the members. I spent time interacting

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by acquiring legal authority. It is the focus of widening struggles by increasing numbers of 'peoples' for recognition, legitimacy, and validation. It has been taken control of by its living subjects—reverse-engineered, rearticulated, and put to use as a tool of liberation" (2003, 221).

with organization members during training workshops, social events of various sizes, and protests. This is one of the richest methods for data collection, providing insights that would not necessarily be provided through interviews (Bernard 2006). The descriptive practice of ethnography relies on embedding locally specific stories and experiences of everyday life in the larger framework of understanding what it is to be a social being. Gaining a deeper understanding of the communities involved in CONAIE has allowed for a direct examination of the representation provided by the organization. The primary participant observation periods were spent in Quito and Puyo within the two organizations' headquarters. The offices of CONAIE were difficult to access without appointments, but did provide a chance to talk with the organizational leadership while they went around their regular obligations, particularly the Communication Director. CONFENIAE's headquarters in Puyo was much easier to access, but was not necessarily inhabited at all times. Most of the time spent with the organizations was carried out at pre-arranged meetings with specific members, or during events of various sizes in Quito and Puyo. Some of these events, such as protests, were located in the downtown of either city, while planned workshops took place in various community halls and assembly halls.

I had my own Canon Rebel T3i DSLR camera, as well as a selection of fixed prime and zoom lenses with me in Ecuador, and took many photos during events that the organizations were then able to use in their communication practices. I. selected many of the photos to connect my own ethnographic voice with the experiences of the organizations. As was mentioned above, these photos were placed in conversation with the vignettes that are placed throughout the chapters of this thesis.

My photographic skills provided a service to CONAIE and CONFENIAE, allowing them to receive a benefit from my participation during events such as protests and the consultations of various Indigenous nations and peoples in the organizations. I walked around during the events, chatting with organization members during the down time, and taking photos from a variety of angles that I passed to the Communications Directors to use in online posts about the events. Whether I was using photography or not, I attended as many public events and protests as possible during my time in Ecuador, allowing me to interact with general members of the organization as well as the leadership.

Participant observation with communities associated with CONAIE was more difficult due to the limited time that I spent in the communities. I participated in daily activities in the small communities I visited to the extent that I was able, but the main portion of my activities in each location focused on workshops and interviews with the participants.

Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods in ethnographic research. While there are a variety of types of interviewing, the type that is most useful within the context of this research project was semi-structured interviewing. Semi-structured interviewing allows for flexibility when related or significant topics are introduced by informants, as well as ensuring that pre-identified topics have been sufficiently covered for the researcher's needs (Bernard 2006). These interviews were carried out with a range of individuals within CONAIE and CONFENIAE's leadership, with a series of interviews completed with the Communication Director of each organization, as well as with the communities associated with the organization.

Two main areas of focus led my interviews: The interviews held with the Communication Directors focused on the choices they have made around what to put online and how to frame their media practices, such as their reasons for choosing to focus on specific subjects on the website, the effectiveness of the representation for Indigenous peoples as a whole and specific communities, and their perspectives on the use of the Internet as a representational medium. The interviews held with organization members included discussions of the representation already being used by the organizations online, such as the topics that were chosen to share online, how they choose to communicate with the organizations, such as which social media the organization members prefer, whether the topics being shared online reflect the interests of themselves and their own community, and whether there are additional subjects or issues that they would like addressed online, but which have been excluded.

Visual Methods

Many of the materials being presented online are specifically visual in nature – either static images or video. Using images within research reflects this inherently visual nature of the

research topic. Two visual methods were used in conjunction with the interviews conducted with research participants: photo elicitation and photovoice. The first of these two methodologies, photo elicitation, includes the use of photos during interviews as a way to encourage discussion and reflection, and to increase rapport between participants and the researcher (Collier and Collier 1986; Marion and Crowder 2013). Within the context of this research project, the materials used for photo elicitation were images and media already included on CONAIE and CONFENIAE's websites and social media, and were used casually during interviews. With the Communication Directors and other media creators, these images, graphics, and videos were used to explore the reasons for the representational choices that were made, such as why a specific image was chosen over others, what the media was intended to convey about the organization and about their intentions, and how the image was created. The second of the visual methods involved in this research project, photovoice, will be discussed in depth within Chapter 7.

Online Data Collection[14]

There is a large amount of publicly available information accessible on CONAIE and CONFENIAE's websites and social media profiles, including text, images, graphics, and video, all of which provided value sources of information. The websites and social media profiles (particularly Facebook and Twitter) were observed for themes over the course of the entire research project. As much of the communication between myself and the organizations, including scheduling and planning, took place over social media, these media proved to be essential tools for the research project. The continuation of regular online data collection throughout fieldwork in Ecuador depended on the availability and quality of Internet access, however these were sufficient within Quito and Puyo, and there were only two brief trips to small communities during which I was unable to access online data sources.

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[14] The websites that I examined included the main homepages of CONAIE and CONFENIAE, as well as each organization's Flickr (CONAIE: https://www.flickr.com/photos/conaiecomunicacion/), YouTube (CONAIE: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrPYtmCgYW8WTuC94J5_bCQ; CONFENIAE: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqiol7sAspydlnsYtxc1mZg), Facebook (CONAIE: https://www.facebook.com/conaie.org; CONFENIAE: https://www.facebook.com/comunicacionconfeniae.redacangau) and Twitter (CONAIE: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador; CONFENIAE: https://twitter.com/confeniae1) profiles.

As mentioned above, the data that I collected from these websites included a wide range of materials including: text from publicly posted announcements and news events, including text from the large number of posters and infographics produced by CONAIE and CONFENIAE; photos and videos of events, which were used in photo elicitation, as mentioned in the section on visual methods above; finally, publicly shared social media posts on CONAIE and CONFENIAE's official Facebook and Twitter pages. Collection of online data can be seemingly endless, so the data was generally confined to that posted officially by the organizations.

The data collection carried out during the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign,[15] which began in December 2016 and actively continued through the spring of 2017, is outlined in detail in Chapter 4, but was defined separately from the overall research. The focus of this research included Twitter data collected both using Application Programming Interface (API) and by hand. While the API provided access to some of the information needed for my analysis, there were elements that needed to be collected by hand as they emerged during the campaign. Images, for example, could more effectively be considered as they emerged throughout the campaign. This data was then compared with posts being made on other social media, most importantly Facebook.

Outline of Chapters

This work begins with an introduction to the two organizations in Chapter 2, providing a history of CONAIE and CONFENIAE and an overview of the interactions of these organizations with the Ecuadorian government. This history provides the grounding for the remaining chapters, since the political situation impacts all of the representational choices being made by the organizations. Chapters 3-5 discuss the online communications of the organizations, beginning in Chapter 3 with an overview of the online communications of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. This chapter provides the basic information of what media the organizations are choosing to use for their representational practices. Chapter 4 transitions to a discussion of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign as it was carried out on social media, followed by Chapter 5 with a discussion of the

[15] This campaign was the result of a conflict over the distribution of mining rights in Shuar territory to a Chinese company. When the local communities protested the mining concession the Ecuadorian government sent the military to enforce their decision. Further details of this conflict are developed in Chapter 4.

visual elements of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign. These chapters provide insight into the role of social media in responding to a specific political situation, and the ways that social media is used to connect the various supporters in an online network. Chapters 6-8 focus on themes that emerged during the two fieldwork trips within Ecuador. This second grouping of chapters begins with a discussion of the role of support networks within the organizations' communication practices in Chapter 6, as well as an analysis of one of the main events used to develop those connections. Chapter 7 focuses on a series of photovoice workshops that I developed in collaboration with CONFENIAE. These workshops were a major factor in the development of my own relationship with the organizations, including an analysis of visual communication methods created by youth from the organizations. Finally, Chapter 8 examines a march that occurred at the very end of my fieldwork in Ecuador, providing a consideration of the flow of protest actions from online to on-the-ground.

Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation provides an example for thinking about representational choices and rights movements, and the affordances of the various forms that constrain these two areas. We all have very specific ideas about what representation does, including the impact we think it is having on a wider rights-based movement. We may assume that the use of social media platforms has increased visibility of a movement. We may assume that images appeal to social media users and can drive more meaningful engagement. We may go further and assume that an online campaign leads to more meaningful support of a movement. These ideas may or may not line up with the reality of their impacts, which are notoriously hard to pin down, particularly when someone is trying to understand the wider picture of an organization.

One thing is evident, the physical presence of bodies is still the most effective means of creating an impact. Whether this is in the context of training and collaboration with other media users, the use of small events as opportunities to increase the visibility of communication activities, or the development of a large-scale protest to force dialogue with a government, on-the-ground action is essential to meaningful engagement in an organization's wider communication activities.

Chapter 2: Indigenous Rights Organizations and Politics in Ecuador

I walked slowly down the street, somewhat hunched and squinting against the glare of the midday sun. I had landed two days before, and though I was still suffering from the headache caused by my elevation sickness I needed to venture out of my hostel to find something to eat. I couldn't eat granola bars forever, and I knew my emergency airport rations would run out eventually. As I came out into the Plaza Simón Bolivar at the tip of Quito's Parque La Alameda, I was surrounded by a sudden swell of people. Color swirled around me in the form of protest signs, focusing on environmental protection and ending resource extraction. There were logos for a wide range of organizations, including student groups from the local universities, some larger environmental organizations, both the large organization CONAIE and what I later learned were local Indigenous organizations based in and around Quito. As I spun to take it all in, chanting swelled from one side of the plaza and the crowd swept around me on their way to the presidential palace down the hill in Old Town.

The vignette above discusses the first of many protests that I came across in Ecuador, and about which I had only the most limited of details. This experience was strikingly repeated during my second fieldwork trip, when a very similar protest gathered in the same plaza to protest the participation of Chinese mining companies in the Amazon. Many of these protests were focused on issues that had broad appeal, bringing a wide range of organizations and interest groups together. Though it didn't strike me at the time, this was my first introduction to the continuing prevalence of on-the-ground protest within Indigenous politics in Ecuador. This chapter will outline the major events in the history of Indigenous organizations and Indigenous politics within Ecuador, providing context to the Indigenous organizations' uses of media to develop support for Indigenous issues, and to encourage faster and more open exchanges of information between organization members. Each of the organizations that I will be discussing in this thesis work for a wide range of rights and issues. The background provided in this chapter offers an introduction to some of the challenges that the organizations confront in their work, which in turn influences the representational choices highlighted in the remaining chapters. Issues such as autonomy, land rights and influence over resource extraction are driving factors in the work of the organizations and their use of media to support their goals. These issues also exist in a complex web of forms,

which influence the organizations through their various affordances. The electoral cycle of the government is one example of a rhythmic form that has a high level of influence over the organizations. The organizations' own hierarchical structure is another that influences the relationships between not only the smaller organizations and peoples that they are representing, but also individuals. Throughout this chapter it will be helpful to keep this positioning of the research in mind, as it is a useful way to understand the complicated and sometimes contradictory structures that shape the background to this research.

The Organizations

Ecuador has a long history of Indigenous movements and organizations, reflecting a contentious political climate and problematic history with Indigenous rights. As is the case throughout the Americas, racism and oppression are a continuing legacy for the many diverse Indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Though progress is being made towards respect for Indigenous rights, it is slow and often faltering, sometimes set back again by specific governments, or in reaction to specific issues, as discussed below. In response to the discrimination and negative perceptions that they face in their daily lives, Indigenous peoples have formed themselves into organizations which aim to share their voices with the wider public, thereby providing improved advocacy for small communities. My work focuses on two of these organizations, *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) which functions at the national level, and *La Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE) in the Amazon has a highly involved membership and is closely embedded in their community. Each of these organizations has played a prominent role within Ecuadorian politics since the 1980s, a history that continues to shape their interactions with the government and with Ecuadorian society as a whole. Both of these organizations are extremely active in the Indigenous rights movement within Ecuador, working with a wide range of allies and focusing on issues as situations develop and change throughout the country. Their methods of communication have also been shaped by these long and complex relationships, such as access to mass media representation and the development of community-based broadcasts, with historical interactions impacting the communication methods that the organizations are able to employ and the topics that they choose to promote.

CONFENIAE

La Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (CONFENIAE) is one of the oldest and most active of Ecuador's regional organizations. They are also strongly associated with CONAIE,[16] which will be discussed in more detail below, and act as an umbrella for smaller organizations and communities scattered throughout the Amazon. CONFENIAE represents 11 Indigenous nationalities[17] throughout the Amazonian region of Ecuador, providing training opportunities, support for specific causes and issues in individual communities, and overarching organization of campaigns impacting all communities. Participation in the organization does vary across the region. For a variety of reasons some Indigenous nations are more loosely associated with CONFENIAE than others, for example, because they want the freedom to pursue their own agendas or due to greater isolation in the Amazon. Regardless of participation on a daily basis, most nationalities choose to participate in large-scale activities that CONFENIAE organizes, such as the march on the capitol that took place in November/December 2017, and will be discussed in the final chapter.

CONFENIAE carries out a diverse set of activities. The headquarters outside of Puyo hosts many of the meetings of the member communities and nations which are scattered throughout the Amazon. They organize a number of events and workshops as well, focusing on skills that will benefit the organization and the individual communities. Two workshops that took place during my fieldwork, for example, explained laws that impacted Indigenous communities, such as the requirement for informed consent before beginning resource extraction, and taught safety during protests. Communication practices have been a key focus of these activities in recent years, including a wide range of workshops that focus on sharing specific knowledge (such as highlighting changes to the legal codes related to broadcast frequencies, which provides greater

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[16] CONFENIAE is technically a member organization of CONAIE, though they work autonomously in many situations.

[17] Within Spanish the term *nacionalidades* is frequently used to identify specific Indigenous peoples with sovereign interests and distinct histories and traditions, nationalities is a direct translation of this term. Within Ecuador the use of *nacionalidades* is particularly noteworthy, as the government has acknowledged and committed itself to recognizing and honoring the *plurinacialidad* (plurinationality) of Ecuador. This recognition of Indigenous nationality is written directly into the constitution, which is discussed further in footnote 10. Many of the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador prefer to explicitly identify as nationalities. The 11 nationalities that CONFENIAE represents are the Shuar, Kichwa, Achuar, Waorani, Quijos, Sápara, Andoa, Shiwiar, Siona, Secoya, and Cofán. There are additional Indigenous nations in the Amazon not represented by CONFENIAE.

access to mass media like radio and television), as well as developing skills in various media (for example, radio, television, and social media).

CONAIE

In 1980, CONACNIE was created as a coordinating body at the national level for the regional organizations CONAICE,[18] ECUARUNARI,[19] and CONFENIAE. In 1986, the organization was redefined as an independent entity and renamed *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE). Since it's reimagining, it has continued to offer coordination and support to regional and smaller organizations as a national umbrella organization, but also represents the interests and rights of Indigenous peoples across Ecuador in its own right. Their support takes a number of different forms, similar to CONFENIAE, including participation in events and protests, spreading messages put out by the smaller organizations, and providing a stronger voice in negotiations with the government. Independently, CONAIE is recognized as one of the most influential Indigenous organizations in South America. The organization is known for its direct action against the government, ability to advocate on the national and international stage, and willingness to forge alliances that will benefit the peoples that it represents. These alliances often lead to more involved participation in the campaigns and struggles of organizations from other areas of the country, or with organizations not explicitly focused on Indigenous rights, such as environmental organizations (Selverston-Scher 2001, xiii). In reality this has resulted in two separate lines of action for CONAIE: one specific to Indigenous interests, and the other designed to address more general issues within the country.

This wide-ranging organization has spawned numerous movements through a focus both on pan-Indigenous identity[20] and, increasingly, through calls for political reform intended to appeal to a

[18] CONAICE: *La Confederación de Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities and Communities of the Ecuadorian Coast) – Regional organization of Coastal Indigenous peoples

[19] ECUARUNARI: *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui* (Awakening of the Ecuadorian Indigenous Peoples) – Rural regional organization of Andean Indigenous peoples

[20] The claims of CONAIE to speak for and represent all Indigenous communities has a somewhat contentious history, as they have essentially stepped in to act as the arbiter of appropriate identity (Beck and Mijeski 2000). Some argue that the process has become vital within Indigenous movements and organizations throughout the Northern Andean region as identity has become a political tool for negotiation (Cervone 2012, 28-29). Others disagree, and emphasize community as the factor that plays a key role in mobilizing within Ecuador (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009b, 89).

broad cross-section of the Ecuadorian population. CONAIE has a long history of powerfully impacting the politics of Ecuador. The organization has been one of the unifying forces behind a number of large-scale protests, such as frequent marches on the capital and *levantamientos.*[21] This wide-ranging orientation of CONAIE can be seen in the breadth of issues that have been the focus of their various movements, and the various alliances that they have successfully developed in their efforts to improve the status of Indigenous peoples within Ecuadorian politics. Based in Quito, CONAIE most directly represents the Indigenous populations within the Andes; however, they do represent the interests of other groups as well, including regular participation in protests of smaller organizations like CONFENIAE. CONAIE therefore focuses on a broad variety of issues, not confining themselves to a single concern. Issues emphasized by the organization include access to water, food security, land rights claims, bilingual education, and maintenance and respect for Indigenous cultural traditions.[22] This breadth of focus both provides support for a wide range of communities while also resulting in each area of focus not receiving equivalent attention.

[21] Uprisings against the government.

[22] CONAIE's website details their aims, as well as giving more detailed information about specific campaigns: https://conaie.org/quienes-somos/

Figure 2.1. Photo of a cup of coffee and a juice at a café table in the Plaza de San Francisco in Quito. Photo by author.

The sun was blaring down in the late morning as I wandered through the Plaza de San Francisco in Quito's Old Town. I had been waiting for over a week for a finalized appointment to meet with Apawki Castro, the Communication Director for CONAIE. I had been trying to keep myself busy while I waited by learning my way around the city, but I found I was already falling into habits. Each morning I would explore a different part of Quito, visiting museums and stopping in a cafe whenever the sun started to overwhelm me. As I wandered past the souvenir shop/café blend of Tianquez I was lured over by the umbrellas casting shade onto the cobblestones. I sank gratefully into a seat, asking the waiter for a café con leche and a jugo de guanábana – coffee with milk and a soursop juice. My explorations did have the benefit of

allowing me to meet people around the city, talking to people in cafes, shops, museums, and during festivals.

Orienting Principles: Súmak Káusay[23]

The Indigenous peoples within CONAIE and CONFENIAE share basic concepts that have unified them as a cohesive movement. One of these concepts, *Buen Vivir*, which means "well-being" in English, has become a rallying call for governmental reform in the region and a topic of intense debate within political and academic circles. For Indigenous movements around the world, it is a model for responsible development that incorporates Indigenous identity, as well as considerations for "climate justice and the rights of Mother Earth" (Escárcega 2013, 131). *Buen Vivir* has even been integrated into government policy, through incorporation into the Ecuadorian constitution, and most strikingly in the Ecuadorian *Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir* – now in its third iteration from 2017-2021 after the initial Plan for 2009-2013, and the second for 2013-2017 (González and Vázquez 2015). *Buen Vivir* has acquired a number of associations through its use in these diverse contexts, essentially oriented around "the organization and construction of lifestyles and knowledge that allow the coexistence of humans and nature, and the assumption of heterogeneous non-Western worldviews in an intercultural frame" (González and Vázquez 2015, 316). Its emergence in 2004 as a counter-discourse in struggles against neoliberalism and NAFTA launched the concept onto the wider political stage, resulting in the later development of policies (such as that mentioned above) paying lip-service to the concepts and distracting from the issues that remain fundamental to Indigenous peoples.

Despite these uses of *Buen Vivir* by the state, in usage by Indigenous organizations and movements, it has an ontological focus that is based on Indigenous principles of relationality both among people and between people and the natural world around them (González and Vázquez 2015; Kohn 2013). Within Ecuadorian Indigenous movements *Buen Vivir,* also referred to as *alli káusai* or *súmac káusay*, and has been incorporated into the organization at the foundational level. Macas has discussed Indigenous concepts related to *Buen Vivir* at length, and identifies six that have strongly influenced the structure and functioning of CONAIE: *ayllu* (family),[24] *ayllu llakta* (community),

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[23] *Alli káusai* and *sumac káusay* are both Quichua phrases from which the Spanish translation *Buen Vivir* was derived.

[24] The use of the term "family" as a translation for *ayllu* is somewhat contentious, as the English term is not a conceptual translation. According to Marcelo Fernández Osco, who has personal experience living within an *ayllu*, "The *ayllu* keeps order by maintaining an understanding of the sacred order of everything. This sacral sense charges the notion of

minka (collective work), *rimanakuy* (the practice of dialogue), *yuyarinakuy* (agreements) and *pacha mama* (nature) (Selverston-Scher 2001, xi). These concepts are evident when looking at the shifting goals that CONAIE has sought to fulfill during the nearly thirty years of their existence.

Figure 2.2. Photo of the changing of the guard ceremony in front of the Presidential Palace in Quito. Photo by author.

The drizzle soaked through my hat as I stood pressed against the shoulder of the woman next to me, packed together in a crowd by the police keeping observers away from the front of the Presidential Palace. I ducked to avoid the tine of an umbrella as I maneuvered to get a photo of the havoc as President Correa stood on the balcony waving at the swarm of people. This was one

life with resonances that expand beyond humans to include a multiplicity of life forms that are not considered in asymmetrical or objectivist terms. For example, the earth or *Pachamama* is seen as mother and has the same needs for respite, nourishment, respect, and consideration as the *jaqi* – the social person. Humans and non-humans are simply part of a larger body of living entities that are infused by the gods and therefore sacred" (2010, 30-31).

of the earliest experiences that I had in Quito, during those early days of wandering around the city, bringing home the reality of the colonial history of the Ecuadorian government. The changing of the guard is advertised as an appealing tourist attraction, drawing large crowds to the Plaza Grande in Old Town. Each week a large group of soldiers dress in formal uniforms, a military band plays, a group of soldiers on horseback ride in procession around the central fountain, and whatever members of the government are working within the city come out to wave at the crowd. It all gave me flashbacks to similar ceremonies that I had seen while I lived in Europe, imported almost in their entirety to Latin America alongside their government systems.

Government Interactions

In 1998, Ecuador created a constitution which provided protection to Indigenous peoples, including the description of the country as "multiethnic and multicultural." This constitution provides recognition of Indigenous languages for the official use of Indigenous peoples, as well as rights to Indigenous cultural identity, property of ancestral knowledge and traditional common lands, and respect for natural resources. Created during the interim presidency of a Fabián Alcarón of the Alfarista Radical Front, this constitution originated following the controversial period when first Abdalá Bucaram (Ecuadorian Roldosist Party) and then Rosalía Arteaga (Independent Movement for an Authentic Republic) were forced out of power. While the constitution was intended to demonstrate the focus of the country on equality, and a respect for the traditions of Indigenous peoples, there were limits to the enforcement of these rights.

Both before and after the passage of the 1998 constitution, Indigenous organizations have been heavily involved in a range of protests against the government. Three times, during Bucaram's overthrow in 1997, and again in 2000 and 2005, CONAIE was involved in the uprisings that forced presidents out of power (Yashar 2005; Becker 2008, 168-193). These times of unrest saw Indigenous organizations allying with other sectors of the population, including the military.

President Correa's Impact – 2006-2017

Prior to Rafael Correa's election as president in 2006, Indigenous organizations supported him as a candidate. The promises he made were extensive, including land rights and respect for Indigenous territory and rights. Based on his discourse, there seemed to be evidence that he

would uphold some of the promises previously made to Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Correa ran on a socialist platform, part of the Pink Tide of socialist politicians being elected throughout Latin America during the time.[25] In 2008 Correa succeeded in passing a new constitution, which most notably identified Ecuador as a Plurinational country,[26] and provided for the rights of nature with the conception of *Buen Vivir/Sumac Kawsay*[27] (Lucas 2008). This concept ensured that extractive industries would be limited due to protection of sensitive ecological areas, and would be required to carry out extensive consultation with Indigenous peoples on whose territories they wished to carry out extraction.

Correa remained president from 2007 to 2017, and throughout that time relations with Indigenous peoples worsened. As president, he increasingly supported oil and mining companies over Indigenous peoples' rights, increasingly through militarization in Amazonian communities opposing the extractive industries (Ling and Intercontinental Cry 2017). In the case of drilling in the Yasuní National Park, for example, Correa claimed that the decision to pursue resource extraction was due to a lack of international support for the initiatives that would have protected the region (BBC 2013). Throughout his presidency, Correa consistently emphasized the economic factors in his decisions to allow resource extraction, with the result that Indigenous peoples faced repression and the criminalization of their protests.

President Lenín Moreno – 2017-2021

Ecuador's Indigenous organizations again had high hopes prior to the 2017 election, anticipating that the presidential candidate Lenín Moreno would fulfill some of the promises made by Correa's government. The *Marcha por Un Diálogo con Resultados* described in chapter 8 was

[25] The Washington Post referred to Correa as "economically populist, socially conservative, quasi-authoritarian" (Miroff 2014).

[26] Long before the creation of the 2008 constitution, CONAIE was debating the balance between calling for autonomy for Indigenous nations and their role within the nation-state of Ecuador. CONAIE as a national organization maintained its desire to exist within a larger plurinational country and recognized the Ecuadorian government (Macas, Belote and Belote 2003, 221). Prior to the creation of the 2008 constitution, CONAIE outlined specific expectations of what the implementation of a Plurinational constitution would look like, including redistribution of wealth, a reduction in bureaucracy, some (though not complete) autonomy for Indigenous and afro-Ecuadorian nationalities, focus on sustainability, and recognition of Indigenous languages as official state languages (CONAIE 2007).

[27] Full text of the constitution can be read here: https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/documentos/constitucion_de_bolsillo.pdf

organized to remind Moreno of these promises, with some successes that will be detailed in the discussion at the end of that chapter. Again, however, there seems to be a breakdown occurring in the relations between the government and Indigenous peoples. Despite promises to the contrary, Moreno announced a new sale of oil concessions in the Amazon in early 2018, continuing the policies that Indigenous communities found problematic during Correa's presidency (Collyns 2018). Relations between Indigenous peoples and the government quickly began to oscillate between promises made and promises broken, focusing largely on issues of land rights and extraction (Cowles 2019). It remains to be seen whether this relationship will stabilize, but with Moreno's movement towards an increasingly conservative political stance in other areas it seems unlikely (Ripley 2019).

Direct Political Participation

While CONAIE still organizes street-level movements on a national level, they tend more often to function within established political frameworks and systems when it can progress their cause. Often this requires finding ways in which existing laws can be used to the benefit of Indigenous peoples. For example, the enactment of the Agrarian Reform laws allowed for some consolidation of Amazonian Indigenous lands within the already existing national legal framework. In other instances, working within existing laws requires official discussions between Indigenous leaders and government officials to protest abuses of existing laws, such as those related to resource extraction.

Representatives of CONAIE emphasize the importance of dialogue in these types of political encounters, highlighting the processual nature of working within government systems (Luis Macas in Selverston-Scher 2001, xviii). When organizations choose to use official political channels to offer this support, they can, however, encounter a number of potential issues. The slow and conflicting process of carrying out dialogue can leave Indigenous peoples in an uncertain position for extended periods while decisions are reached. They are also left with uncertain results, as agreements struck with one government may not be maintained following the next elections.[28]

[28] For example, the different approaches to trade agreements between left and right-leaning governments can impact Indigenous communities through policies related to taxation of external produce or resource extraction policies.

In 1995, CONAIE moved beyond their typical use of alliances with the creation of the political body Pachakutik.[29] While CONAIE claimed at the time that this was a political movement rather than a political party, it functioned within the framework of national electoral politics and made claims to representing the needs of all Ecuadorians, and of the intention of creating a plurinational country.[30] Pachakutik was later separated from CONAIE, in an attempt to disassociate it from specifically Indigenous interests. These methods appear to initially have seen some success, as Pachakutik managed to win nearly 10% of congressional seats during the 1996 election, making them the fourth largest congressional bloc (Mijeski and Beck 2011, 48). By the time elections were held in 1998, however, the situation had changed due to divisions within both Pachakutik and CONAIE, and between the two. Conflicts included a lack of fulfillment of campaign goals, as well as accusations of corruption. Pachakutik's political strength continued to be compromised throughout subsequent years,[31] arguably damaging the Indigenous movement as a whole (Mijeski and Beck 2011).

The presence of Indigenous leaders in governmental positions does not necessarily guarantee faster or smoother decision-making processes, despite an attempt to engage more directly with their constituencies (Van Cott 2008, 134). Not only do leaders have to contend with the considerations of the entire national population in their decisions, they are also more easily coopted by other interest groups (Zibechi 2012, 276). This issue arose between CONAIE and Pachakutik following elections in the late 90s. While direct representation of Indigenous peoples within government is essential for overcoming the racism and repression historically seen throughout the Americas,[32] finding ways to revolutionize the system in order to truly democratize and limit power of elites will be a harder challenge. The use of political parties linked to social organizations like CONAIE has thus far seen limited success, and arguably may have caused as much damage as good. It is possible that in the

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[29] *Pachakutik* (the movement is alternatively known as the MUPP-NP) is a Quichua word meaning rebirth or transformation (Mijeski and Beck 2011, 41).

[30] As mentioned above, the concept of a plurinational country is intended to acknowledge the status of Indigenous nations throughout Ecuador, which could then be treated with equal consideration to their rights as nations. There are limited explanations for all of the ways in which this would be accomplished, however the use of Indigenous languages within the government and education is one example of a possible area. As Kenneth Jameson discusses, CONAIE shifted to promoting the concept of plurinationality in 2001, moving away from an explicit focus on land reform to consider each Indigenous nation as culturally distinct political and economic entities with "a right to their territory and autonomous internal political administration" (CONAIE 2001, 5 quoted in Jameson 2011, 67).

[31] Pachakutik never again achieved the level of votes attained in the 1996 elections. They made a number of choices that resulted in lack of trust and confidence from voters, including forming the coalition with Lucio Gutiérrez's presidential campaign in 2002.

[32] Providing a "political voice to marginalized groups is crucial for any democracy" as it forces those in power to consider alternative perspectives to their own, often entrenched, views (Villanueva 2013, 81).

long term these issues can be overcome, though currently CONAIE and Pachakutik are only minimally linked within the Ecuadorian political sphere. Regardless, and despite a lack of success in campaigns for the highest offices,[33] Pachakutik has continued to win a handful of seats in the National Assembly during each election cycle since 2006.

Figure 2.3. Photo of a barrier advertising the reform of land right law. The title reads, "Reform Law of the Law for the Legalization of Land Tenure," while the text below reads, "The terrible cases of invasions in Ecuador will not be repeated. Ecuadorians now have the right to a decent life." Photo by author.

I was walking back to my hostel near the Parque La Alameda in the first days of fieldwork, having spent the day meeting with people who might have a room I could rent. Leaving the final meeting in an apartment building near the Estadio Olímpico, I wove South through smaller streets, sweating in the heat and panting from dehydration. Pausing at the top of a hill, I stood

[33] Luis Macas received only 2% of the votes as Pachakutik's presidential candidate during his electoral campaign against Rafael Correa in 2006 (Lucero 2012, 288).

looking at a series of barriers around the National Assembly building, which was under construction. Each of the barriers highlighted the reform of a specific law and the ways that the reform would improve life for the people of Ecuador. They seemed to cast life in Ecuador in a rosy light, emphasizing the positive aspects of the law in a way that made me uncomfortable. As people pushed around me, going about their daily business, I methodically photographed each of the barriers, recording each to later look up each of the laws to better understand what conflicts they might be obscuring. This sense of unease about the messaging around rights foreshadowed what I would later learn of the conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the government around issues such as land rights and resource extraction.

Indigenous Rights and *Autonomía*

Issues of Indigenous rights reflect a complexity that is often belied by the terminology that is used, as each right is deeply interwoven with a range of others. Ultimately, at their core, Indigenous rights discussions relate to the entire lifeways of peoples, with individual issues difficult to separate from the larger spectrum of rights discourse. Thus, the commonly used *autonomía,*[34] is a complex term that may be used at any time to advocate for all or only a few of a wide range of issues, including self-governance, control of territories and resources, food sovereignty, Indigenous language use and revitalization, education, and the continuance of many other religious, social and cultural practices. Even with the diversity of the communities represented, CONAIE and CONFENIAE have found ways to forge powerful collective identities (Selverston-Scher 2001, 69). This shared identity is largely based on land as the common denominator, emphasizing both the importance of connection to the land for identity and land as a basic need for survival.

In much of the literature focused on Indigenous rights in North America, there is a wide use of the term self-determination. Within South American Indigenous movements, and within academic literature discussing these movements and organizations, the term self-determination is rarely used; rather, there is a focus on *autonomía*. The North American concept of self-determination and the South American concept of *autonomía* are often used in the same or very

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[34] The term *self-determination*, more frequently used in North American discussions of Indigenous rights, has a similar connotation to *autonomía* as it is used in the South American context.

similar ways, with some variation in the level of sovereignty inherent in the term *autonomía* depending on who is using it, and in what context (Van Cott 2001). Ideas of territory, freedom, and power are also inherent in the concept of *autonomía*, and it has been used to argue for increased rights for Indigenous peoples not only to territorial claims, but within social and political contexts as well (Gustafson 2009). Under the label of *autonomía,* some Indigenous peoples have called for complete territorial sovereignty, while others have made much less contentious demands for inclusion within state politics and social structures. Hector Díaz Polanco[35] clarifies the relationship between self-determination and *autonomía*, stating that "being a regime grounded in the demands of the communities themselves, autonomy is a system through which socio-cultural groups exercise their right to self-determination. Autonomy synthesizes and politically articulates the array of demands advanced by ethnic groups. Therefore it can be said that autonomy is the fundamental demand" (1997, 98).

Autonomía is one of the main guiding principles of CONAIE, which focuses on the rights of the Indigenous peoples within the organization to not only occupy their own territory, but also to participate in their own governance, and social and cultural practices, including speaking their Indigenous languages. Luis Macas[36] has outlined CONAIE's conception of Indigenous peoples' autonomy within the state as "the right of these nationalities to choose their own political and juridical system as well as their model of economic, social, scientific, and cultural development, in a territory geographically defined within the frame of a new Plurinational Nation" (quoted in Gustafson 2009, 1000). While individual communities may desire full independence from the state,[37] CONAIE as a national organization maintains its desire to exist within a larger plurinational country and recognizes the Ecuadorian government (Macas et al. 2003, 221). This

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[35] Díaz Polanco is a research professor at the Center for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology (CIESAS) in Mexico. He has written extensively on the subject of autonomy, particularly within the context of the Zapatista movement in Mexico.

[36] Macas participated in the founding of CONAIE before serving as president of the organization from 1990 to 1996, and again from 2004 to 2008. He is one of the most widely cited authorities on the formation and functioning of CONAIE. Educated as a lawyer, he was also an elected national congressional representative from 1996 to 1998, as well as running as a presidential candidate with Pachakutik in 2006. More details of his life can be found in Macas et al 2003.

[37] Indigenous peoples throughout Latin America have not generally called for secession or sovereignty from the state, almost universally focusing on self-determination or autonomy (Gustafson 2009). Despite this fact, autonomy has always engendered a fear of lost territorial integrity in states, often leading to extreme governmental reactions to discussions of *autonomía* (Gray 1997, 292).

decision is logical for an organization with such a diverse constituency, as full *autonomía* is impractical for some sectors of the country.

Despite a focus on land, CONAIE has limited mobilization around resources, they have been explicitly involved in the call for greater services for Indigenous peoples, and have successfully negotiated the creation of a number of governmental ministries focused on the social needs of Indigenous peoples. Many of these negotiations with the government took place fairly early in the organization's history, leading to rapid change in the status of Indigenous peoples within Ecuador. The *Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador* (CODENPE), for example, was created in 1997 as a quasi-governmental body that advises on policies related to Indigenous peoples throughout the country. Though funding for CODENPE is governmental, the head is a representative of CONAIE, which allows a level of direct political participation that is rarely possible (Van Cott 2002, 64). This has allowed for the creation of further governmental bodies benefitting Indigenous peoples, such as the *Dirección Nacional de Salud Indígena* (DINASI) in 1999 (Macas in Selverston-Scher 2001, xvi-xvii). These successes represent the importance placed on cultural factors within CONAIE, a focus that has at times been at odds with the general focus on land rights. The call for bilingual education, however, is one of the earliest demands that CONAIE presented,[38] which resulted in the creation of *Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (DINEIB) in 1988. The Indigenous education model has been particularly successful, and includes elements such as university education within Indigenous communities[39] (Macas in Selverston-Scher 2001, xvi-xvii).

Within the Amazonian context full *autonomía* is a logical goal, as Indigenous peoples still control large portions of their traditional territories. This level of control, largely brought about by physical isolation and the subsequently much later colonization of the region, allows for more direct development of local governance structures. The same concept of full *autonomía* is

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[38] To see a full list of the demands proposed by CONAIE during the 1990 *levantamiento*, see Appendix A.

[39] The development of these educational programs has seen some setbacks. In 2012, for example, the *Universidad Intercultural Amawtay Wasi* (UIAW) lost the accreditation that they had gained in 2004 after a government review claimed that their educational offerings did not meet minimum requirements. UIAW, which had four campuses functioning in Indigenous communities, protested a lack of intercultural perspective in the accreditation review process. They currently function unofficially as the *Pluriversidad Amawtay Wasi* (further information is available here: https://www.facebook.com/pluriversidad.wasi; https://youtu.be/Rlbdj4fCKrs).

potentially problematic within the Andean region. The rich agricultural land of the Andes was colonized much earlier, and Indigenous governance of territory remains limited and highly fragmentary. Additionally, with the small amount of arable land available for communities it is nearly impossible to produce enough food for subsistence. Populations have become highly migratory, with many community members working seasonally outside of the villages and youth leaving to continue their education or find work within urban centres (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009a). In these communities, *autonomía* has become focused on cultural factors, such as the use of Indigenous languages and practices in education and healthcare, with claims for land reclamation being made based on the need to improve the agrarian potential of Indigenous-controlled land.[40] These differences will be expanded on in the discussions of goals and themes later in this paper.

Regional Differences' Impact on Land Rights

There is a regional variation to the rights debates within Ecuador, reflecting the historical interventions of the state and the impacts of phased colonization. Within the Sierra[41] region, the combination of accessibility and fertility of the land lead to early interventions of the state in claiming the territory, leading to the subsequent dispossession of Indigenous communities. While many of the Indigenous peoples in these regions have managed to retain cultural identity, the lack of land has led to dispersal, food insecurity, and migration as youth seek opportunities in urban centres outside of their communities.

The issue of land reclamation and land-based governance is one of CONAIE's main unifying concerns,[42] and has been a constant element to draw the organization's disparate groups together.

[40] This division is also evident in the differences between CONAIE and earlier movements and organizations that did not explicitly focus on an Indigenous identity. Nina Pacari, a long-time CONAIE leader, points out that earlier movements lacked "a broader political perspective," and "while these concrete demands [such as for improved wages or land] remain central concerns of the Indigenous movement, they are now accompanied by demands of a more political stripe: the right to self-determination, the right to our cultural identity and our languages, and the right to develop economically according to our own values and beliefs" (quoted in Becker 2011, 202).

[41] Ecuador is divided into three regions: the *Costa*, encompassing the coastal region to the west of the Andes; the *Sierra*, which is includes the Andes and their foothills; and the *Oriente*, which defines the Amazonian basin to the East of the country.

[42] Land rights was the main issue during the 1990 *levantamiento*, though perspectives and approaches to the issue varied with regional differences. Indeed, one of the most dramatic of the movements during the *levantamiento* – the

Despite the equality of concern related to land rights, the distinct environmental and historical realities of each region have resulted in different possible actions for Indigenous peoples to take in reaction to the state. Land reform and redistribution was initially undertaken in Ecuador in 1964. The original goal of these reforms was to turn Indigenous peoples into peasants and citizens who could be governed (Yashar 2005, 88). During this period many Indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian Andes participated in the legally sanctioned organization of agrarian workers' cooperatives, and in many cases were associated with the *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (FENOC). Intended as a way to foster class-based identities, these structural reorganizations had the unanticipated result of granting a space for Indigenous autonomy by providing opportunities for communities to practice Indigenous customs internally while externally functioning as a peasant collective (Zamosc 2003, 41-46; Yashar 2005, 97; Pallares 2002). While these structural changes did not result in Indigenous control over large amounts of land,[43] they did allow for the development of community links necessary for organizing to occur, as well as the expression of cultural identity (Yashar 2005, 99-106). Currently, Andean land claims may be related to issues of communal land ownership, as will be discussed in reference to the Amazon, but are more often concerned with the inability, as mentioned in reference to autonomy, to control enough land to viably support a community. The lack of land is then implicated in other community issues, including inability to attain food sovereignty and the loss of youth to pursue other potential opportunities.

In the Ecuadorian Amazon land rights tend to revolve around calls for *autonomía* and a desire to manage and regulate resources. As mentioned earlier, these stronger levels of control by Indigenous communities were much easier to attain, as colonization of the territory did not begin in earnest until the first Agrarian Reform Law of 1964. Even then colonization tended to be strongly related to the boom-and-bust cycle of resource extraction, resulting in sporadic incursions (Erazo 2007, 179). Some Indigenous territories in the Amazon have been successful

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occupation of the *hacienda* Charrón in Chimborazo – would have happened regardless of the actions of the larger movement (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009a, 85).

[43] Many large landowners avoided forced redistribution through the sale of small parcels of their land, even managing to drive up the price between potential buyers (usually a mix of mestizo and Indigenous people who had either been working on the land already or were from nearby towns). In the end, about a third of the land remained in the hands of large-scale landowners, a third was in the hands of medium-sized holdings, and the remaining third was split between Indigenous people and mestizos who were either producing for subsistence or for the market economy (Stocks 2005).

in achieving a level of sovereignty unseen elsewhere in Ecuador. The community of Rukullakta, for example, was granted title to their land as a collective in the early 70s, and since that time has become a well-established example of Indigenous governance (Erazo 2013). This community provides a good example of how CONAIE's guiding principles can function in practical application, for example in their use of communal work. Despite their high level of self-governance, they have also chosen the same path as CONAIE in avoiding complete sovereignty and have partnered with the Ecuadorian government on conservation and food sustainability schemes. Additionally, despite strong differences of opinion and diversity, they have managed to forge a shared identity that has maintained for over four decades.[44]

CONAIE has been shaped by the diversity that they represent. With the inclusion of Indigenous peoples from not only the Andes, but also the coast and the Amazon, the organization has needed to find a way in which to balance interests, appeal to a wide range of peoples, and to create a "horizontal voice" (Lucero 2008, 3-7). Despite CONAIE's attempts to promote a pan-Indigenous form of identity politics, it is important to dispel the myth of homogeneity inherently embedded in these representational choices, and to understand the values and dangers of these differences for the organization (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009a, 12-15).

Often there is tension between small-scale movements or local-level organizations and the wider/broad-based representation of CONAIE (Zibechi 2012, 19). These smaller groups may feel that their community-specific needs are not being met by the wider demands of CONAIE, particularly as the organization reaches out to ever-wider alliances throughout Ecuador, and the wider region. This has historically been the case in conflicts between groups focused on cultural demands and those focused specifically on land and resource rights (Selverston-Scher 2001, 82). Organizations and communities focused on the importance of land and resource ownership often see interests in cultural rights and services, such as bilingual education, as peripheral. For these groups, cultural factors can be developed after *autonomía* has been attained, allowing them to create institutions internally and avoid the drawn-out process of state-level decision making. These disagreements tend to reflect the basic regional differences that play a divisive role in

[44] For more details see Erazo 2013.

many CONAIE campaigns. In the Amazonian context, where more cohesive territory exists and state-control is limited, the option to define social and cultural programs internally may provide more opportunities. For the Andean peoples, the historic seizure of land by colonists and subsequent migration may mean that national social and cultural programs are the best way to ensure the recognition and maintenance of cultural values throughout dispersed communities.

There are five key points to take away from this discussion: 1) the importance of land for all peoples; 2) the concept of land is approached differently in various regions, which is strongly linked with historical state interventions; 3) land reclamation claims are a reflection of unifying Indigenous principles – not just of *autonomía*, but also of concepts such as *ayllu*; 4) land claims allow for a more coherent focus on alternative forms of development;[45] and 5) land claims tend to be the factor that leads to other kinds of rights and claims

Extractive Industries and Indigenous Territories

Control over traditional territories and the resources that they represent are one of the most fundamental points of conflict between Indigenous peoples and the state in Ecuador, particularly for those communities located in the Amazonian region where oil and gas are abundant. CONAIE and CONFENIAE both act as strong supports of the rights of Indigenous communities to manage and control their traditional territories, including preventing destructive extractive practices that the government is keen to progress for income generation. Many of these extractive industries are carried out through mining concessions that are sold to multinational or international corporations. Some of the most prominently discussed corporations emerge from Canada and China. The protection of these mining concessions has led to many disputes, including some violent clashes between police or military forces and local communities. These are most often located within the Amazonian region of Ecuador, far from the population centers of the country, and often difficult to access. This inaccessibility also places them further from areas in which they can effectively protest these abuses, and has historically made it more difficult to share informational about these situations as they develop.

[45] Blaser discusses alternative forms of development at length in his discussion of "life projects," emphasizing the rejection of binary conceptions inherent in modernity/development discourses, and instead emphasizing the connections between Indigenous identity and place (2004).

Calls for Indigenous control of territory have often gone alongside calls for Indigenous management of natural resources, and "[m]any Indigenous peoples also occup[y] what [are] environmentally fragile areas, thereby neatly combining ecological considerations with Indigenous rights" (Mijeski and Beck 2011, 3). The 1992 *Caminata* that the *Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza* (OPIP) organized from Puyo (located in the Amazonian province of Pastaza) to Quito emphasized this perspective. While the ultimate goal of the movement was to gain control over uncolonized traditional territories, it was framed in an environmental context with spokespeople drawing strongly on the knowledge of Indigenous peoples to live within and manage the environment appropriately (Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango 2003, 191). Opposition to oil exploitation played a large part in the framing of their protest as well, drawing the attention of the public both inside and outside of Ecuador. This approach was successful in gaining the communities a significant portion of their demands, including over a million hectares of land and the withdrawal of the oil company from the region (Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango 2003).

The 1992 movement was only the first of a long line of nationally prominent conflicts over oil development. Conflicts have occurred at various times with Texaco/ChevronTexaco, ARCO, BP-Amoco, and even the state oil company, Petroecuador.[46] CONAIE has been at least indirectly involved in many of these movements, often funnelling support systems through their associated regional organizations, such as CONFENIAE and OPIP (Sawyer 2004). In 2006, when Indigenous peoples again protested abuses from an oil company – this time US-based Occidental (OXY) – not only CONAIE, but Pachakutik[47] as well, directly joined in the protests. In addition to support structures established through local and national organizations, these environmentally oriented campaigns are often supported through transnational networks, as will be discussed in the next section.

[46] Likewise, though Ecuador has larger proven oil reserves than either, Peru and Bolivia have both had similar conflicts over oil. Within Peru, which has oil exploitation from both large transnational companies and through the national oil company Perupetro, Indigenous organizations such as AIDESEP have attempted to counter neoliberal policies in much the same way that organizations in Ecuador have. For more details see Stetson 2011.

[47] The political party associated with CONAIE. See the section discussing Direct Political Participation above for further elaboration.

Movements of this kind hold a potential internal source of conflict as well. Often oil companies will behave benevolently towards the communities in the immediate vicinity of their sites, offering jobs, financial incentives, and even low-level forms of control or oversight to local people (Sawyer 2004, 59). For communities without an established claim to the land these possibilities may seem especially appealing, as the benefits are seen immediately and can have a dramatic impact on individual lives. Thus, oil operations are "seeking to shape individuals' expectations, transform their allegiances, and define how to be an appropriate neoliberal subject" (Sawyer 2004, 18). This has very real consequences on the ground, for example in Pastaza, where Indigenous communities sympathetic to the oil companies and their material support organized the *Directiva Intercomunitaria de las Comunidades Independientes de Pastaza* (DICIP). This new organization opened a schism in the Indigenous movement within the region, resulting in a weakening in the ability to counter the oil companies on the national stage (Sawyer 2004, 59).[48]

Indigenous people have begun to take more direct legal action in dealing with resource extraction issues. In 2012, after eight years in the legal process, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the Ecuadorian government had violated law by not consulting with the Kichwa people prior to allowing the Argentine oil company *Compañia General de Combusibles* (CGC) to drill on their lands (Khatri 2013). Prior to this decision the Inter-American Court had been seen as reflecting a more conservative stance on resource extraction in Indigenous territories than is laid out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Pascualucci 2009). Therefore, this decision may indicate a turning point in international legal standards, and set a precedent in the region that will allow Indigenous peoples to more readily challenge state abuses. More recently, the Waorani people won a court case against the Ecuadorian government, successfully challenging their right to sell off drilling rights to a block of land that included traditional Waorani territory (Cowles 2019; Riederer 2019). The Ecuadorian government did not carry out appropriate consultation before beginning the process to auction off the rights to these blocks,

[48] This "divide and conquer" mentality is a common approach used by governments dealing with self-determination or autonomy movements, as it often allows the smaller factions to be neutralized by the creation of inter-group conflict, to settle with the groups through compromise, or for the groups to be more easily suppressed (Cunningham 2014, 172-173).

resulting in grounds for the legal challenge. Other blocks went through the same flawed process, opening them up to the same possibility of challenge from the Indigenous peoples whose traditional territories are represented in these divisions.

Conclusion

The interests and activities of CONAIE and CONFENIAE are largely shaped by the social and political reality of Ecuador, and the changing relationships between Indigenous peoples and other sectors of Ecuadorian society. While some positive changes to the status of Indigenous peoples was offered by the 1998 and 2008 Ecuadorian constitutions, including increasing recognition of Indigenous nations' *autonomía*, these changes are not consistently reflected in their treatment by the state or in public culture. This disparity between stated intention and action is particularly clear in cases of resource extraction within Indigenous territories, where the requirements for Indigenous informed consent and participation are rarely followed. These bureaucratic structures function in forms as bounded wholes, many of which have remarkable stability and are extremely difficult to change.

An overview of the history of the Indigenous rights movement in Ecuador is essential for understanding the communication practices of indigenous organizations, both because these are the conflicts that are often the focus of statements they are making publicly and discussing with supporters, and because the laws and legal standing of Indigenous peoples dictate the methods they use to communicate. Conflict between Indigenous peoples and the government are recurring themes throughout this work, and will be revisited in relation to online campaigns and on-the-ground actions. The following chapter will delve into greater detail on the relationships between these historical interactions and the communication practices of CONAIE and CONFENIAE, providing an overview of online representation before examining the example of a specific online campaign.

Chapter 3: Online Communication Platforms and Indigenous Organizations

I stood awkwardly outside the wall, largely unidentifiable, except for a mural flaking off the cement. I double checked the address. I was a little bit early for the appointment we had set by email, but I decided to push the buzzer anyway. A crackling voice answered after a minute and I announced in faltering Spanish that I was there to meet with the Communication Director, Apawki Castro. I was buzzed in and gestured down the hall by an impassive woman, where I got a bit lost and had to retreat back for more specific instructions. While the offices were not enormous, they comprised two floors of rooms, with a series of office spaces for CONAIE's Directors, and meeting rooms for planning and consultation sessions. Following the instructions from the woman at the front desk, I turned through a couple of doorways and was greeted by Apawki Castro, a smiling and impressively young Kichwa man.

Figure 3.1. Photo of the CONFENIAE headquarters at Unión Base outside of Puyo, Ecuador. The large banner on the end of the building says, "Welcome to the headquarters of CONFENIAE," while the other banners represent past

campaigns. The murals on the small outbuildings demonstrate elements of Indigenous cultures and the jungle that surrounds CONFENIAE. Photo by author.

A year later, I sat in a taxi as it wove through the small roads outside of Puyo, taking me further and further from the small city center. I sat in the back seat, worrying about how I would get back into town, since I had been told that there wasn't a bus that went all the way out to the headquarters. We passed scattered houses, finally passing through the small community of Unión Base and pulling up in front of a large wooden building. A line of large, brightly painted wooden masks hung across the front of the building, surrounded by a collection of signs from a variety of campaigns. Stepping into the humid heat, it started to rain, and I ran for the cover of the overhanging roof. A moment later, Andrés Tapía appeared on the stairs, tall, his long curly hair pulled back in a ponytail, and a welcoming smile on his face. Ushering me up to one of the two large rooms used for office and meeting space, it was immediately obvious that this was a constantly used space.

Apawki Castro and Andrés Tapía were the Communication Directors of CONAIE and CONFENIAE, respectively, during the time I worked in Ecuador. Each of these men was dedicated to supporting the movements of their organization, and played the role of go-between for myself and their organization. Each was also instrumental in ensuring that my research brought some benefits to their organization, particularly Andrés Tapía in the case of CONFENIAE. The impact of these first experiences with each of them could not have been more influential to my research. While I had contacted each of them before travelling to Ecuador—Apawki through CONAIE's official email address, and Andrés through both email and a message to CONFENIAE's Facebook account—neither of them engaged with me in any concrete way until I had met them in-person in Ecuador. Our initial messages were limited to coordinating these physical meetings. This direct human connection is important in working with Ecuador's Indigenous communities, and emphasizes that talk alone has not always developed into productive relationships between the organizations and non-members of the organizations, and only participation can really demonstrate intentions. This is true beyond just the academic interactions, and the close relationships between online and on-the-ground activities were demonstrated again and again throughout my time in Ecuador.

Each of these men was also the embodied core of their organization's communication structure, involved at all levels. Each of them was highly involved in the planning of general representational goals, such as choosing to emphasize youth participation in the organizations; representation through mass media, such as newspaper and television coverage, as well as with specific social media campaigns; they recruited organization members to act as media managers and content creators, forming partnerships and alliances that could improve the training of their communication team; and they were the constant presence online – posting or re-posting on Facebook and Twitter, linking to the posts of allies or other news sources, and reposting important updates on the official website. The solidity of each of their roles within the hierarchical form of their organization had a huge influence on the effectiveness of their efforts.

This chapter begins with a general consideration of the representational experiences of Indigenous peoples and organizations, particularly considering examples that transitioned to ICTs, such as the Zapatistas. The chapter will then move on to an evaluation of the state of ICT use in Ecuador, and the way this impacts Indigenous organizations' ICT use. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description and analysis of the websites and social media pages for each of the organizations. These websites are the central hubs for official information about the organizations, and while both provide similar types of information, the CONAIE website is more developed and overall, more professional in appearance. Despite the limitations of their website, however, CONFENIAE is arguably more active on social media. This seems to be due to a few reasons, the first is the amazing level of dedication of the Communication Director Andrés Tapía, as well as the heavy involvement of other leaders in social media. The second factor is the immediacy of the issues that are being shared through social media, many of which are taking place in communities where the leaders live or have friends and family, and that directly affect their daily lives. CONAIE frequently shares information originally published by other organizations, and is a little more distant from many of the issues as they are based in Quito. Finally, the technology itself has a huge impact on the chosen media, with the use of mobile technologies dominating in the Amazon leading to a prevalence of social media for ease of use. All of these factors lead to the adaptability of representation by CONFENIAE, while CONAIE

maintains a strong official standing from which to represent Indigenous rights in more formal settings. These factors will be expanded on in the conclusion of the chapter.

Mass Media and Changes to Communication Practices with ICTs

Mass Media Representation

The term “mass media” encompasses very specific top-down communication formats, such as newspapers, radio and television. All of these communication forms are heavily controlled through a top-down approach by a handful of knowledge producers: journalists, editors, publishers, radio and television producers, owners of these media companies, and governments in the case of public broadcasting. Media creation reflects broader societal trends as well, with media producers attempting to increase their audiences in competition with one another and becoming increasingly commodified through the use of a 24-hour news cycle that emphasizes fear and division (Yúdice 2003, 137). These trends are undermining their interest in accurate representation and has “diminished their social function” (García Canclini 2018, 274). Though not descriptive of all journalism, this trend is particularly common in television and reflects the corporate nature of many news outlets. This is by no means to claim that there have not always been alternatives to mainstream media available to counter these messages. While small scale producers of media have existed as long as each media technology, however, they typically have a shorter range or a more limited reach than their larger (and usually more official) counterparts. So, while a small printer or a pirate radio station may provide an opportunity for alternative messaging, they are unable to access the size of audiences that are receiving information from larger media sources. These limits are often geographic as well, with small scale communication methods limited by the range of a transmitter or the cost of producing and distributing individual items.

This control of messaging through small-scale media is important, as the most widely spread message helps to shape the perception of truth of a larger portion of the population than can be reached by independent media. Even with goals of journalistic integrity and objectivity, biases can be hugely impactful on minorities or other groups suffering from repression (Biekart and Fowler 2013; Carty 2002; Carty and Onyett 2006; Pickerill 2003; Stein 2009). Often mainstream media will misrepresent groups, in the case of Indigenous peoples this has been observed in the

example of representations of the U'Wa by the Rainforest Alliance Network (Landzelius 2006). Distorted representations of Indigenous peoples have historically taken one of two forms in the majority of cases, either an image of uncivilized brutes intended to inspire fear in the general population,[49] or as the noble savage like that of the example given, often used by environmental campaigns and when trying to evoke nostalgia for undeveloped landscapes (Landzelius 2006). The U'Wa of the Colombian Amazon and their conflict with Occidental Petroleum and the Colombian government provide the perfect case study of the "society of the spectacle" as Kyra Landzelius calls it (2006, 123). In the face of oil development on their traditional lands the U'Wa claimed a willingness to commit mass suicide, sparking a campaign supported by numerous NGOs, most prominently the Rainforest Action Network (RAN). While the campaign was ultimately successful in preventing the oil development from taking place, it was problematic in its representation of the Indigenous people. This representation formulated them within a framework that was outside of modernity; that was solely traditional with no ability to adapt to changing local situations or a changing economy; and that placed them as the natural defenders of their traditional environment. This was a largely visual trick, representing the U'Wa through a series of photographs in traditional activities and backdrops which were then juxtaposed with the surrounding natural environment, this created a "[semantic slip] into a generic meta-native body: sign of innocence, testament to authenticity, proof of harmony betwixt man and nature" (Landzelius 2006, 124). While there are a number of problems with such a framework, one of the most distinctive is the lack of connection to the experienced reality of the group, and the potential for any development on the part of the Indigenous group to endanger future support for campaigns against governmental or private enterprise incursions. Even if information is directly shared with mass media outlets by Indigenous peoples, there is no way for them to ensure that they are being represented how they want to be. Messages can easily be co-opted or morphed to better support the intentions and interests of the media's creator. Examples of this media

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[49] This was a common representation of Native Americans in the US, and many clear examples of this form of representation exist, often in popular literature such as Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. These are lasting tropes that have extended into the recent past and present day. Many articles and books are available discussing the representation of Indigenous peoples in Settler-created media, for one useful example, see *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Bird 1996). For another example of the Native American representation in US popular culture, see the article "I is for Ignoble, Stereotyping Native Americans" (Hirschfelder and Molin 2018), referencing the collection of the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University: https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/native/homepage.htm.

"ventriloquism" can often be seen in the experiences of minority organizations and movements that are represented by mainstream allies, such as with the Zapatista example to be discussed below (Romero 2011).

Changes with the Development of ICTs

A shift to new ICTs offers increased potential for representative democratization, the potential for direct self-representation, and access to wider audiences. ICTs in general, but particularly websites with the increasing ease of development and social media with increased accessibility and networking capabilities, have had a huge impact on the way in which representation is undertaken by minority and marginalized organizations. With the transition to digitization a number of factors change, such as the replicability of media, the speed that information can be shared, and the relative inexpense of creating and sharing media (Burri 2010, 33). These factors all benefit people who have often been excluded from mainstream representations or who have received largely negative representations in the mass media, but who can now develop their own representations online. These factors remain intact with the vastly increased use of social media after 2009, which require even less investment of time or money and minimal skill level to create profiles, connect to other users with similar interests and goals, and to react to or directly counter the information presented in mainstream media (Shirky 2009).

The development of online platforms also moves media from a "push" to a "pull" format, allowing the viewer to choose what they are viewing rather than relying on available radio and television broadcasts or print media (Morello 2007, 59). In some ways this can be beneficial, as it allows individuals who are looking for more information about a topic or event to find information that has been presented as a counter to mainstream discourse. This open access to information is no longer the entire story in reference to social media, however, as there are limits to access developing through the use of algorithms by social media companies that in many cases present individuals with information that they are more likely to agree with, resulting in the creation of media or knowledge silos (Dylko et al. 2017). This is potentially impactful for organizations working towards social and political goals, as they are often prevented from using

direct representation to sway the perspectives of individuals who may have become supporters.[50] This limitation may require further investigation, however, as other evidence suggests that successful social media campaigns can create equivalent levels of public awareness as feature pieces on mainstream news (Hunt and Gruszczynski 2021).

ICTs and Internet Use for Protest Movements

While there are issues inherent in some ICTs, the overall move to digital technologies has had distinct benefits for social and political organizations and protest movements. Online communication platforms have provided a valuable tool, allowing organizations and movements to rapidly mobilize supporters, share news and events, and build increasingly large support networks (Castells 2009, 2012; Postill 2014, 53). Often the criticism is that ICTs do not help to create a shared sense of identity or purpose within a movement, resulting in weak connections that result in more willingness to participate in online activities as opposed to on-the-ground actions (Nekmat et al. 2015), or that do not extend beyond the confines of a protest (Bennett 2003; Bennett and Segerberg 2011; Biekart and Fowler 2013). Even while all online activity may not translate to physical action, these communications are still reaching much wider audiences, and have resulted in some clear successes. Some of these are well known, such as the use of Twitter during Arab Spring to organize large numbers of supporters (Tufekci 2017), while others may be more obscure, such as the movement to remove the Guatemalan president Álvaro Colom from office (Harlow 2010). John Postill argues that the process of using social media during a protest or movement creates nanostories surrounding the events, and despite being individually short-lived, "over time they add up to a powerful sense of common purpose" (2014, 57). For organizations that already have established memberships and well-developed alliances, social media becomes an indispensable tool for mobilization during specific events, benefitting from the use of nanostories in the same way as individual protests and movements, and potentially augmenting their support network. This interplay creates a feedback loop, where the continuum of online support and physical action build on one another, allowing greater support and success for overall campaign goals.

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[50] For a concrete example of the potential impact of social media silos, see the Columbia Journalism Review article about the 2016 US Presidential election (Benkler et al. 2017): https://www.cjr.org/analysis/breitbart-media-trump-harvard-study.php

Indigenous ICT Use for Protest

For Indigenous peoples, these aspects of the technology function as a double-edged sword, offering potential for Indigenous peoples to build connections with other peoples around the world, to share cultural information and correct misconceptions and misrepresentations, and to bring international awareness to human rights violations (Burri 2010; Belton 2010). The other edge of the sword shows a medium relatively unregulated by governments where Indigenous peoples can be easily impersonated or misrepresented, where traditional forms of authority may be undermined or challenged by youth seeking knowledge outside of their communities, and where traditional and sacred knowledge can be shared and replicated by outsiders without controls once it has been posted (Belton 2010, 198).

Indigenous ICT Use for Protest – the Zapatista Example

Possibly the most widely discussed, and well known, example of ICT used by an Indigenous organization is the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico.[51] Indeed, while other Indigenous peoples had a presence on the Internet before them, it has been claimed that "no catalyst for growth in the electronic NGO networks has been more important than the 1994 Indigenous Zapatista rebellion in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico" (Cleaver 1998b, 622). From the very beginning of the Zapatista uprising communiqués were shared over the Internet, a fact that may be seen as surprising due to the severe lack not only of Internet access in the region, but also to electricity and phone service in many rural areas (Froehling 1997, 291). The Zapatistas' initial use of the Internet was therefore externally mediated in nature, relying as it did on the actions of

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[51] In reaction to the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA), as it came into effect on January 1st, 1994, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN, or Zapatistas) declared war on the Mexican government. In San Cristóbal de las Casas and other towns in Chiapas, Mexico the Zapatistas began an armed rebellion to control and occupy the region. Their goal was to bring attention to the damaging neoliberal and assimilationist policies of the Mexican government. The EZLN brought a printed declaration of war, the *Declaración de la Selva Lacandona*, which was initially shared with the outside world through a student's phone call to CNN. News media arrived in the region following that call, though full coverage of the initial Zapatista declaration or following communiqués were rarely printed in full. A cease-fire to military hostilities was quickly declared under international pressure and intense protest in Mexico City, and dialogue began between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government in late February 1994. Dialogue continued sporadically, and no settlement was reached until the signing of the San Andrés Accords in January 1996. These agreements were rejected by the government in 2001, and in later years it seems Zapatista focus has shifted to building solidarity internationally and developing autonomous systems such as healthcare and education. For further detail about the history of the Zapatista movement see Froehling 1997; Holloway and Peláez 1998; Cleaver 1998a, 1998b; Belausteguigoitia 2006; and Morello 2007.

outside actors for online representation (Cleaver 1998b, 628). Handwritten reports were spread by contacts of the movement and expanded rhizomatically.[52] Over time information sharing gained organization, materials began to be collated into e-books and CDs, and websites and "mirror" sites were set up by individuals as hubs of information for the movement, often organized by scholars and other individuals who were involved in the region and who were sympathetic to their cause, such as students or workers at NGOs (Morello 2007, 58). The Internet also functioned as a forum for correcting the misinformation spread through the mass media by the Mexican government,[53] first by allowing for cross-referencing of diverse sources of information, and second through the use of forum threads (Cleaver 1998a, 86).

The Zapatista movement is still in existence, and interests of the Zapatistas continue to be mediated by outside individuals in some cases, perhaps most notably the interests of women. The place of women within the Zapatista movement has been complex and, in some ways, contradictory. Women have been included in the leadership structure of the EZLN from the very beginning, and the role of women in traditional culture has been one of the most important frameworks for the movement (Belausteguigoitia 2006, 101). The Women's Revolutionary Law is one of the founding documents of the EZLN (included at the end of the Declaration of War), and states ten basic demands for the improvement of women's position and situation.[54] The

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[52] Supporters "typed or scanned the communiqués and letters into e-text form and sent them out over the Net to potentially receptive audiences around the world. Those audiences included UseNet newsgroups, PeaceNet conferences, and Internet lists whose members were already concerned with Mexico's social and political life, humanitarian groupings concerned with human rights generally, networks of Indigenous peoples and those sympathetic to them, those political regions of cyberspace which seemed likely to have members sympathetic to grass-roots revolt in general and networks of feminists who would respond with solidarity to the rape of Indigenous women by Mexican soldiers and to the EZLN 'Women's Revolutionary Law' drafted by women, for women, within and against a traditionally patriarchal society. Again and again, friendly and receptive readers spontaneously re-posted the messages in new places while sometimes translating the Spanish documents into English and other languages. In this way, the words of the Zapatistas and messages of their communities have diffused from a few gateways throughout much of cyberspace" (Cleaver 1998a, 83).

[53] Beginning in 1995, documentary filmmaker Alexandra Halkin was also involved in the development of a community video project in the region entitled Chiapas Media Project (CMP)/Promedios (the names of the respective NGOs in the United States and Mexico that organized the project). The first workshops were held in 1998, and as of 2008 the project had trained more than 200 Indigenous men and women in video production skills (Halkin 2008, 177). Videos created by participants focused on showing daily life in two Zapatista towns – Ejido Morelia and Oventic. The videos created by the project were used jointly as a way to overcome the negative mass media representations of the region, and as a funding source for continuing further work (Halkin 2008, 175).

[54] A well-considered essay on the Women's Revolutionary Law as it stands today (including the original demands) is available here: https://www.opendemocracy.net/sylvia-marcos/zapatista-women's-revolutionary-law-as-it-is-lived-today.

women's additional demand, for the "Right to Rest" was not included in writing, but essentially responds to women's lack of time away from work and household obligations during which to reflect and to acquire skills (such as Spanish language skills or computer skills) that would allow them to act as their own representatives (Belausteguigoitia 2006, 106). Hence "Euro-American women from academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, grassroots groups and agencies with headquarters outside of Mexico – have stepped in to phrase and circulate Indigenous women's demands," often resulting in their cooptation to more general feminist agendas not specific to Indigenous women[55] (Belausteguigoitia 2006, 106). This leads to the obscuring of the needs and demands communicated by the movement, and a potential decrease in the efficacy of their message (Romero 2011).

The key benefits of early Internet representation for the Zapatistas seems to have been in avoiding the isolation that the Mexican government was trying to instill, building connections on an international level, and raising awareness of the issues faced by Indigenous peoples in Chiapas and within Mexico as a whole. While the first two of these aims have seen overwhelming success, the third aim initially had a more moderate result. Most of the Zapatista supporters on the Internet were located in more heavily networked countries of North America and Western Europe, and they often chose to focus their support for the Zapatista cause on issues that could translate to their own situations and interests[56] (Cleaver 1998b, 627). Since 2001 this situation has changed somewhat, with a fully updated website that now contains links to Facebook and Twitter.[57] This site is hosted in Mexico, and seems to be updated by members of

[55] Involvement of outside NGOs and interest groups is not an inherent problem, and "the ability to define and shape the nature of any movement often falls to those with the necessary social and educational resources" (Fenton 2008, 47). However, interests (or at a minimum understandings of vital issues) need to be aligned for these relationships to be productive, and representations become problematic when distanced from those they represent as they become "defined by dominant discourses which promote bias and reinforce stereotypes" (Iseke-Barnes and Danard 2007).

[56] As Froehling pointed out in the early years of the movement, "The price [of online representation] for the Zapatistas was that direct issues leading to the uprising were displaced, first by the idolization of Subcomandante Marcos and then by a widening of political concerns into an intercontinental contest against neoliberalism […] On the one hand, the circulation of images and messages leads to solidarity actions and a struggle for representation in cyberspace. But war in cyberspace is different from the war in Chiapas. In Chiapas, people are daily hurt by the conflict, through lack of resources and mistreatment, resulting in injury and death. Displace war into cyberspace, and these details retreat. Left by itself, cyberspace connects people in only a limited way and provides only an illusion of participation" (1997, 304).

[57] Visit the website here: http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx

the EZLN. What is clear from this transition is that the potential of the Internet for mass participation leads it to be a technology with "emancipatory power" (Morello 2007, 57).

> Participatory elements also provide connective potential for movements and groups: "The internet, relying as it does on a network of networks can assist collective identity and reinforce solidarity. It partakes in the process of meaning construction. The nature and scope of the technology affects not only the way the movement communicates its aims and objectives but also its geographical scale, organizing structure and collective identity. The decentralized, non-hierarchical modes of organizing allow for diverse political agendas and identities to exist. The challenge is how to embrace difference and particularity while also engendering universality and solidarity" (Fenton 2008, 53).

This process of leveraging shared interests to create alliances has been seen in the use of the Internet by the Zapatista movement since the late 1990s. Organizing their large-scale "Intergalactics" with international allies (Morello 2007) is one example of the Zapatistas' success in using the Internet to overcome geographic boundaries of support. Organizations and movements are now better able to balance a local/global dichotomy, maintaining focus on locally relevant issues while holding governments and corporations to global behavioural expectations.[58]

The Zapatista example of ICT use is just one in a wide range from around the world, however it is one that has been well documented and that presents lessons that can be carried over when considering other organizations' communication practices. Starting two decades after the Zapatistas captured the world's attention with their thoughtful use of ICTs, social media began changing the landscape of representation for organizations and movements. These evolving technologies have added another level of complexity to thoughtful communication practices.

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[58] This statement refers to international agreements such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Figure 3.2. Photo of construction barriers in the Plaza de San Francisco in Quito. Photo by author.

I sighed in frustration, trying to frame an attractive photo of the Plaza de San Francisco in Quito. Tourists and locals alike often fed the pigeons in this plaza, and the swirling flocks would have made for an artistic shot if it weren't for the barriers surrounding the huge excavation marring the center of the space. This was the reality of the city though, even here in the historic district where much of the colonial architecture had been preserved. Development was everywhere. This particular excavation was someday going to be a stop on the metro system that was being built for Quito, an ambitious project that some of the US expats I had met pessimistically doubted would ever be finished. Development could be seen in all sorts of aspects of life in Ecuador, visible in government funded construction projects like this one, in the expensive clothing stores in the malls scattered through newer areas of the city, and in the ads for new phones and other imported technology on signs. Even so, most of the wealth seemed to stay in the capital and in the large coastal city of Guayaquil, often leaving people I met in the organizations and in small towns with used phones and computers. I was getting tired of being so immersed in the disparity of the haves and the have-nots, particularly visible since the woman

I had ended up living with was well off, with two adult children who seemed to spend money without thought – eating out, constantly buying new clothes, and talking about the latest gadgets. After a couple of months with them I still felt uncomfortable working with the organizations and going home to somewhere so extravagant, and it seemed like it might be time to look for a different place to live.

Communication Practices in Ecuador

External Representation of Indigenous Peoples

Racism is common in mass media representations of Indigenous peoples, turning them into an "other" in the eyes of majority populations (for further discussion and specific examples of this issue see Goehring 1993; Stavenhagen 2013; Menocal 1998; Kirmayer et al. 2011). The same is commonly true in Ecuador, resulting in representations that can be damaging to Indigenous organizations and movements. These representations, typically pro-government and pro-extractivism, reflect developmental goals that are counter to the interests of Indigenous communities (Carillo 2016). Outside of professional journalism, representational opportunities for Indigenous peoples were typically limited before the emergence of ICTs. With the increasing access to and popularity of ICTs, and particularly social media, there are greater opportunities to counter these negative representations.

Government Control of Communication and Media: Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación

Freedom of expression has become a contentious issue in Ecuador, especially throughout the presidency of Raphael Correa. In June 2013, Correa managed to pass the first version of the *Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación,*[59] which regulated the media and communication sectors throughout Ecuador. Early after having been passed, this law was considered to have some potentially positive effects, as one of the main changes was to designate all radio and television frequencies to private, public, and community uses, providing an even third to each sector. Previously to the law, Indigenous nations (which are classified under the community sector) had limited access to radio and television frequencies, often finding it difficult to gain access. While there are limited Indigenous nations or organizations producing local television frequencies

[59] The original text of the law is available here: http://www.arcotel.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/07/ley_organica_comunicacion.pdf

within Ecuador,[60] likely due to the prohibitive cost of equipment and production, there is a growing interest in using radio to connect with populations that may be widely dispersed. In spite of the legal obligations for the governmental to grant 1/3 of the frequencies to community uses, however, there has still been extensive criticism by Indigenous nations and organizations of the difficulty and involvement of the process, indeed the application process can drag on for months or years. These challenges were one of the main topics of discussion during the annual *Encuentros Nacionales de la Comunicación Comunitaria*, when I participated 3 and 4 years after the law was passed.[61] Even after communities have received their license for a frequency, there are still challenges related to the expense of equipment and the need to train community members in radio production skills.

There were many issues identified with the law, which was passed without congressional debate and included many clauses that were added at the last minute. One of the most controversial of the articles limits freedom of speech by adding limitations and repercussions on journalists who are "defaming" politicians and citizens.[62] This may also cause problems for Indigenous communicators, as they may also fall under the category of journalists, limiting their ability to effectively challenge government actions. Since the election of Lenín Moreno, however, these controls have decreased, allowing a return of freedom of the press that was not seen during the presidency of Correa (Southwick and Otis 2018).[63]

Government Control of Communication: Internet Freedom

Even during the worst repression of the *Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación*, control of digital content by the government was limited. Most of this repression was directed at the digital content of traditional media sources, such as newspapers. Occasional requests for content removal were

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[60] TV MICC is the only example that I have personally seen, which is produced in Cotopaxi and presented in both Quichua and Spanish. Founded in 2009, the channel has a growing presence as well on social media. See examples of their videos on YouTube here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJsXfiSIRMkvHurUapw_8NA/videos

[61] For a discussion of the *Encuentros Nacionales*, see chapter 6.

[62] For a concise discussion of the issues inherent in the *Ley Orgánico de Comunicación*, refer to this blog from the Journalism in the Americas blog of the University of Texas Austin: https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-14071-8-highlights-understand-ecuador's-controversial-communications-law

[63] It is important to note that despite this increase in journalistic freedom, Moreno's presidency is not without issues, as the October 2019 protests in reaction to austerity measures attest.

sent to search engine and social media providers, such as Google and Twitter, usually on the grounds of defamation or copyright infringement. Ecuador does not have a history of the government consistently blocking access to specific websites, such as is evident in countries like China (Mou, Wu and Atkin 2016), resulting in control by the government being much more closely oriented to individual cases.[64] The *Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación* does, however, allow the government to request service providers block websites during a state of emergency. This article of the law was used in 2014 to block Google and YouTube, though it is unclear whether it has been used since then (Rodriguez 2016). Modifications to the *Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación* in 2019 have eliminated some of the censorship clauses that it originally contained, but the ability of the government to block information access during a state of emergency remains.[65]

Internet Access

Despite common misconceptions, there is a relatively high level of Internet use in South America, though it can be difficult to determine a realistic figure for Internet usage. There is no doubt that within Ecuador Internet access has dramatically increased during the past five years, however sources do not agree on the extent of that growth. Independent reports claim that Internet usage has risen from 45% to 57.3% of the population between 2013 and 2018 (Freedom on the Net 2013; Freedom on the Net 2018). Reports of growth from the government agency Supertel (now Arcotel) are dramatically higher, however, reporting growth from 27.2% in 2011 to 74.4% in 2014 and 81% in 2017 (Internet World Stats 2017). While both of these sources claim to be reporting both hardline and mobile Internet users, neither provides details on the ways in which the statistics are collected or what data is included.

Frequently the method of accessing the Internet is through cell phones, which are especially prevalent in remote areas where it may be difficult to find a physical line to connect through. CONFENIAE therefore, is especially reliant on cell phones. During my research in Puyo in late

[64] For detailed discussion of government censorship of online sources, see the annual Freedom on the Net report for Ecuador: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5be16b1d6.html

[65] See a summary of the changes to the law here: https://www.ferrere.com/es/novedades/ecuador-ley-organica-reformatoria-de-la-ley-organica-de-comunicacion/

2017, the CONFENIAE headquarters at Unión Base did not have an Internet connection. The two computers that were in the office could be used only to create or modify documents which had to be later taken into Puyo to be printed, uploaded to the Internet or emailed. Even if it is possible to install hardwired Internet connections in these remote locations, the cost of installing them can be prohibitively expensive, increasing the popularity and practicality of using cell phones. There are other benefits to using cell phone networks for Internet access, as they can offer deals for phone plans that include free access to specific apps, most often Facebook and WhatsApp. There remain limits on access even by cell phone though, as the most remote regions of the Amazon still do not have connectivity due to the challenges of improving infrastructure in such rough terrain. Likewise, only smartphones provide access to social media and the Internet, and the cost for even a used model may also prove prohibitive to using this as a method to ICT access.

Not every scholar agrees on the effectiveness of ICTs for Ecuador's Indigenous organizations. Based on research completed in 2016, Pascal Lupien and Gabriel Chiriboga (2019) evaluated the limits of the usefulness of ICTs for Indigenous organizations in Ecuador, focusing on 8 organizations ranging from national to community based, all located within the Andean provinces of Pichincha, Chimborazo, and Imbabura. Analyzing the online presence of each organization, complemented by interviews with 15 leaders of the various organizations, Lupien and Chiriboga found that ICTs had limited usefulness to most of the organizations due to a lack of Internet access and limited ability to receive training in the use of new technologies.
While Lupien and Chiriboga specifically comment on the limitations that many organizations suffer from, I do find that there are limitations to their research. First, the rapidly changing nature of technology means that organizations are constantly in the process of adopting new ICTs and of identifying ways in which they can be modified for their unique situations. Second, it is important to consider the scale of the organizations being analyzed. Many of the most useful training opportunities that I observed during my own research were organized by the national and regional organizations, often in collaboration with academic and NGO allies, but were offered to participants from communities across the country. These opportunities have the effect of spreading skills throughout community organizations that are under the umbrella of the larger

organizations.[66] Third, the leaders of the organizations are often not the organizational members most interested or involved in communication activities, and it is often the youth within organizations who are pushing for the use of ICTs for organizational communication. Finally, while CONAIE has a highly complex and well-defined communication plan, the most active ICT use in my own research was carried out in the *Oriente* region, despite having arguably more difficult access issues. Sweeping assumptions should not be made based on a single region. ICT use by Indigenous organizations in Ecuador will require continuing research as the plans and technologies develop and adoption spreads.

Organizational Uses of Communication Platforms

The huge range of ways that both CONAIE and CONFENIAE use online communication platforms can be categorized into four main categories, all of which are constantly emphasizing organizational interests and highlighting specific events and activities. The first of these categories of communication goals is to maintain open communication with organization members. While this communication is maintained by a variety of methods – including the use of older technologies such as phone calls and face to face interactions, social media is of growing importance as it is one of the most popular methods of communication for youth. This is one of the main uses of ICTs, and is essential to the successful functioning of both CONAIE and CONFENIAE. Facebook is the most popular method for sharing information with large portions of each organization, using posts, groups, and messages. Other messaging formats, such as Telegram and WhatsApp, are used for communicating with smaller groups, such as a communication team working on a specific event.[67]

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[66] These training opportunities focus on a wide range of skills, such as the development of community-based communication methods (for example, community run radio stations), or how to use mobile technologies for the organizations' campaigns (such as the use of free apps to create memes or posters for advertising campaigns online), For a concrete example of a training focused on communication skills, see the description of the Photovoice workshops that I lead in Chapter 7.

[67] While these apps are used for communication within the organizations, the Communication Directors specifically identified them as communication methods used among smaller groups and for coordination and planning. Telegram is an open-source messaging service that the organizations use to communicate mostly one-on-one when they are planning campaigns and events. They prefer to use the Telegram app to discuss potentially sensitive issues as they view Telegram as a secure communication method. WhatsApp is a messaging app owned by Facebook that the organizations use to coordinate campaigns and events among larger groups of people. This app is not explicitly considered a secure form of messaging by the Communication Directors, but is no less secure than the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, which they use for wider communication.

As discussed above, ICTs and particularly social media, are often studied for their value in organization and coordination of events, which is the second main category of online communication goals. Sometimes these uses are related to larger movements, examples of which will be discussed in the following chapter in relation to campaigns on Facebook and Twitter. For CONAIE and CONFENIAE, these campaigns are often reactionary, following an action taken by the government. The most common examples are land rights and environmental defense campaigns organized in response to the sale of extraction rights in a specific region. During 2020 for example, the protests taking place in Ecuador against austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been organized with the use of social media platforms. While these social media posts and messages, shared through sites like Twitter and Facebook, are typically aimed at members of the organizations, they can also be directed towards allies and supporters in the region as well. This seems to be one of the main affordances of network forms that the organizations benefit from, however, the effectiveness of these strategies for creating greater engagement and leveraging that engagement for actual change is up for debate. The third, and closely related, category of communication goal is for campaigns based around more fundamental or ongoing rights claims by the organization. Demands for bilingual education, access to and control over clean water and agricultural land, and territorial rights are a few examples of these more long-term goals. The messaging around these goals is often aimed at a similar audience to the second category of communications, trying to ensure greater support to move their demands forward within the national political framework.

All three of these types of communications demonstrate the important link between online and on-the-ground support. While the emergence of online support is helpful, it is the presence of supporters in on-the-ground activities like demonstrations, marches, protests, and even voting, that help to move the organizations' goals towards political realities. The fourth communication category is broader, and aims at creating a wider support network. The alliances that make up this support network, with other Indigenous organizations around the world, academics and universities, NGOs and charities supporting causes that align with the goals and demands of CONAIE and CONFENIAE, and individuals focused on international social justice, can help to support the organizations when they are at their most vulnerable. ICTs allow organizations to

exposure abuses that may have been invisible to the international stage prior to the easy accessibility of these technologies.

Figure 3.3. Photo of a burger and fries from the tiny restaurant Uku Pacha in Quito, laid out in front of a laptop. Photo by author.

I had finally moved, though I had ended up renting a room in a cheap hotel for the remainder of my time in Quito. I was nearing the end of this first fieldwork trip, and I had realized that I was exhausted all the time thanks to the combo of constantly speaking a second language along with the simple reality of being an introvert. The hotel room had been a complete relief after so long being "on," and I was enjoying the freedom of the occasional night where I could come home exhausted in the evening, blow off cooking dinner in favor of a burger from the new place on the corner and close the door. Evenings like this would still end with a conversation with the restaurant owner and a short chat with my friendly landlady, but I found these conversations

helpful in getting to know different perspectives in the city and less stressful than trying to explain my day to my previous landlady, who didn't seem to understand the value of my research and treated me like she did the study abroad students that she had previously hosted. Since it takes two hands to eat a burger, I would take a break for an episode of something in English on Netflix or FaceTime with my husband, allowing my brain to unspool a bit before refocusing to catalogue the changes that had gone up on the CONAIE and CONFENIAE websites, and answering the email and social media messages in both Spanish and English that flooded in during the day.

Online Presence

Official Websites

Both CONAIE and CONFENIAE have had official websites longer than they have been using other online representational methods, such as social media. CONAIE in particular are well established online, and have been represented through a website since the Indigenous uprising in January 2001, when the technology only allowed for static pages with some images and links to other static pages, and which was moderated by sympathetic international supporters.[68]

Official Websites: CONAIE[69]

Website Format and Functionality

CONAIE's official website has been modified throughout the years, evolving to reflect technological changes taking place in web development. When my research on CONAIE began during my MA studies in 2009, their website was uncomplicated by current standards, highlighting the available web design options. Most of the website was static, outlining the background of the organization and their main activities and goals. The website underwent periodic updates, including various options as they became available – for example, the inclusion of a translation option through Google was available prior to the beginning of my research, but

[68] The original website seems to have been created by a Norwegian woman working with *Alianza Indígena*.

[69] Current website found at https://conaie.org; the website version that is being discussed in this dissertation can be found at https://web.archive.org/web/20190711200044/https://conaie.org/

was removed in a later modification of the website.[70] CONAIE's website has been fairly stable since November 2015, with no changes to the menu options. Some sections that have disappeared from the current website include pages for each of the individual departments of the organization, as well as background sections on the organizational structure of CONAIE, and a section with details of the history of the organization that have not been incorporated into other sections.

The website also has close links to the social media sources that will be discussed in the following section. One example of social media presence are the feeds located in a stable sidebar on the righthand side of the page. The first is a Twitter feed providing a link to begin following CONAIE, as well as presenting the most recent tweets from the organization's official account, @CONAIE_Ecuador. Immediately below is a link to begin following the Conaie Comunicación Facebook account with a link to the organization's profile. Further down the sidebar are links to three of the organization's most recent Flickr albums, all from 2018. There are similarly a number of videos linked from Facebook and YouTube accounts, all from important events during the last 5 years. There are other connections to social media as well. One section of the sidebar contains only links for connecting to CONAIE through various social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, and Flickr. All of these with the exception of Google+ (which was closed down by Google in April 2019), are active links. These buttons are repeated again on the far-right hand side of the webpage, present at all times unless minimized into the side.

One of the weaknesses of CONAIE's website has historically been a lack of information under certain menus, or faulty links to other websites. During my MA research, there were a number of sections that were blank, including the sections dedicated to both Women's Programs and Youth Programs. There were very few of these blank sections on the website during the research for this dissertation, with much more comprehensive information about all of the program areas. The

[70] Google Translate can now independently translate webpages, so the buttons directly on the page are no longer required for translation. CONAIE follows the changes in available technology, responding with changes to their webpage as appropriate.

Biblioteca sections, however, all return errors,[71] additionally the *Organizaciones Filiales* subsection only contains a heading. Despite significant improvements in filling the content of the website, there are still a number of links on the website, particularly in the sidebar, that do not work or where the URL has been bought since CONAIE's website was last updated. These links, mostly to the websites of specific campaigns that are no longer the main focus of the organization and accessed by clicking the logo of each campaign, seem to no longer be maintained by individuals who are not in charge of the official organization website.

Management

Management of CONAIE's website has also changed over the course of years. As mentioned above, the original website was developed in conjunction with international allies who had worked with CONAIE and supported their activities. Over time the management changed hands to web design companies and consultants, but with the increasing ease of webpage management the Communications Director has taken over the role. This increasing control of the website allows changes to be made as they are needed to reflect the political reality in which the organization is functioning at any given time.

Content

CONAIE's website is currently fairly well developed, with very few areas that need to be updated. Most of the information presented under the various menu options on the website provides background of the organization, including current projects, as well as historical information about CONAIE's objectives. While there are some documents specifically providing a historical view of the organization, such as a pdf of a 1994 Political Project document describing CONAIE's early goals, the majority of the website is modified periodically to reflect updates to their publicly presented image. This is not entirely successful however, and the complexity of the website does result in a large number of areas to maintain and update. Occasionally this results in inaccurate or incomplete sections, and two things typically happen to these background sections during updates to the website: either they are ported directly from one

[71] These errors do not offer an error code, instead explicitly stating "Nothing Found." Below that the pages say "It seems we can't find what we're looking for. Perhaps searching can help," and provide a search bar.

version of the website to the next with little to no change, or they are deleted if they no longer reflect the current interests of the organization.

Despite this large amount of background information, the overall impression of the website is a focus on the current situation and goals of CONAIE. The most frequently updated portion of the website is the posts, some of which are tagged in reference to specific areas of action, for example to programs for women or youth. There are also large numbers of linked media present on the website, from the social media accounts discussed at length below. This means that the website is constantly changing, reflecting new interests of the organization as they emerge and sometimes obscuring previous areas of focus.

Official Websites: CONFENIAE[72]

Website Format and Functionality

CONFENIAE's current website was only created in 2017, partway through my research process, and even during that limited time has been significantly modified. The original version of the CONFENIAE website was extremely simple, really only a single stable page with menu options at the top linked to information sections further down in the scroll. Links to Facebook and Twitter were the only concession to networked design on their original webpage. Their design remains simpler than CONAIE's website, with no use of stable sidebars, and the only constant elements from one page to the next are three sharing buttons on the righthand side of the page (for Facebook, Twitter, and email), and the footer providing the organization's contact information for various purposes (a repetition of the sources that can be linked to using the buttons, CONFENIAE's telephone number and address, as well as numbers for bank accounts that receive donations under the heading of *Solidaridad*). Much of the website is designed to be stable and unchanging, with few links that would require updating. Much like the CONAIE website, CONFENIAE posts news updates to reflect the current interests and activities of the organization. While news items are typically posted on a monthly basis, there are situations that result in much more frequent posting, such as the development of specific campaigns.

[72] Current website is available at https://confeniae.net, while the version of the website discussed in this dissertation can be found at https://web.archive.org/web/20190730223907/https://confeniae.net/

Content

Much of the content on CONFENIAE's website is static, resulting in a very stable website that does not need to be constantly updated. Background information about the organization is a key element of the website, including an introduction to each of the organization's member nationalities with photos from various events, and a listing of the names and nationalities of the members elected to each of CONFENIAE's governance roles. There is not, however, any discussion of the history of the organization, and all of the content of the website contains elements that examine CONFENIAE's present status. This is evident in the use of updating news elements, which as mentioned above, are posted on at least a monthly basis. It is also evident in the use of media though, which the remainder of the subpages are devoted to.

This use of media spans a wide range of forms: print, images, audio, and video. While this range of media creates a dynamic website, it is not linked media like CONAIE's website relies on, and therefore seems to be more stable. The small number of photos and videos that the website features are hosted on the page itself, preventing the issue of broken links. This may be because, as is discussed in more detail below, CONFENIAE has a smaller footprint on social media than CONAIE and was later to join the various social media platforms. There are two main areas of the website focusing on these media sources. The first is the Voz de la CONFENIAE page, which was created following the idea of an organizational magazine originally printed from 1993-1996. The webpage now hosts a recently produced downloadable pdf version of the magazine, which is complemented by a collection of radio shows to stream or download, produced by CONFENIAE and associated organizations. Some of these radio shows are produced as frequently as once a week with the webpage updated accordingly. The other section of the website focusing on media is the *Lanceros Digitales* page. This communication team highlights their work through a series of photos and videos, many produced by youth within the organization.

Social Media[73]

[73] All of the social media accounts for CONAIE and CONFENIAE were reviewed during writing of this chapter during September and October 2019, so data is not available following that time period.

One of the most notable changes to online communication for both CONAIE and CONFENIAE is the growing use of social media since 2010, and the massive focus on social media in discussions of communication strategies. The strategies of the two organizations are very similar for their use of social media, and are even entwined, since each of the organizations will often retweet or share communications from the other organization. The Communication Directors of the two organizations work fairly closely together, and are frequently participants at the same communication events, such as training workshops.

CONAIE and CONFENIAE have both developed extensive social media presences, including the use of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as frequent use of apps designed for more direct communication between organizers and members, including Telegram and WhatsApp. Facebook and Twitter are the most prolific of the applications used by both of the organizations, providing a platform to communicate with their members, link with other organizations or movements that may share interests with them, connect with supporters within Ecuador and throughout the world, and to provide stories that may be taken up by mainstream media or that counter misinformation by mainstream media. With this wide range of purposes, social media has become an integral link in the communication chain of both organizations. As is shown in Figure 1.2, there are limitations to the extent of access to mobile data due largely to the terrain, which affects the ability of members to access websites and social media. Organization members who live in rural areas that do not have internet access through either hardline or mobile technologies often describe having a mobile phone with pay-as-you-go service for when they are in larger cities that do offer access.

Social Media Platforms: Facebook

When asked how they communicated with the organization or found out what the organizations were doing, young people said that they checked Facebook.[74] Facebook is an increasingly important platform for communication, as shown in the chart below the percentage of social media users in Ecuador active on Facebook has been growing recently, after an early high in 2016 and a subsequent dip in late 2017 through 2018 when Twitter and then YouTube saw a

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[74] Interviews with Photovoice workshop participants (November 16, 2018 and November 26, 2018)

significant use increase. With the most recently confirmed statistics showing 79.3% of the social media use on Facebook, it is the most impactful of all of the social media platforms used by the organizations.

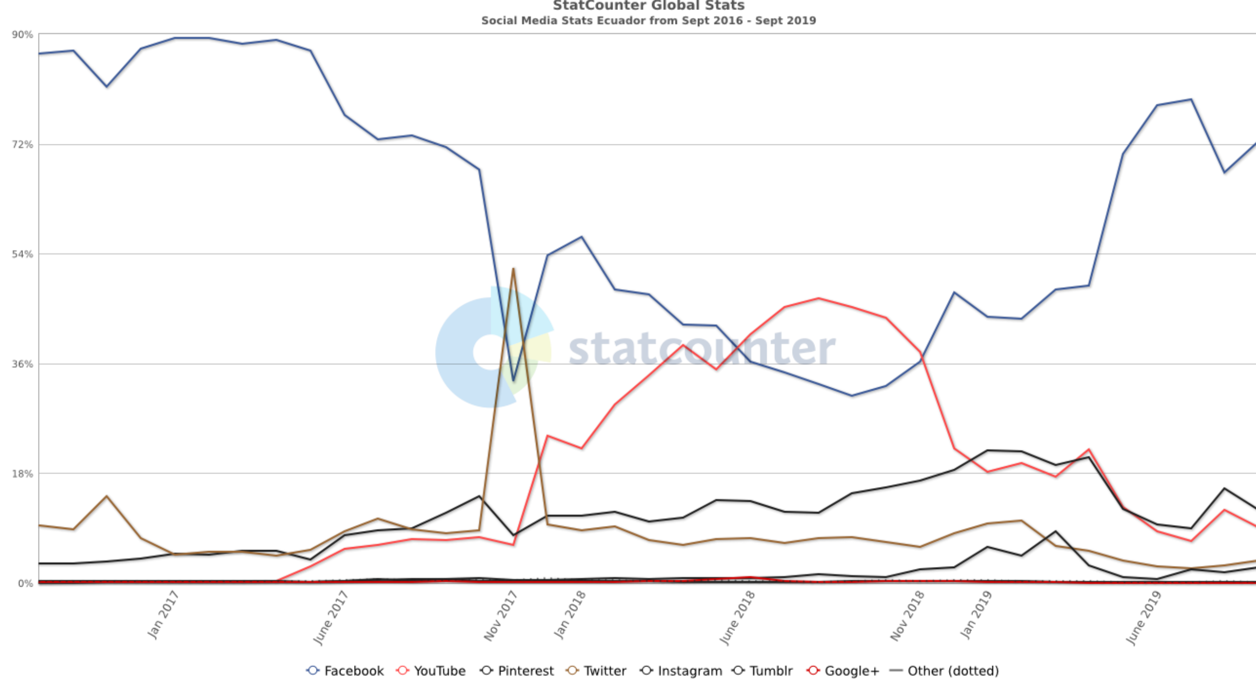

Figure 3.4: Ecuador's changing social media use from September 2016-September 2019 as reported by Stat Counter:[75] https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/ecuador/#monthly-201609-201909

Both organizations have official profiles, CONAIE through Conaie Comunicación (@conaie.org) and CONFENIAE through Comunicacion Confeniae (@comunicacionconfeniae.redacangau). CONAIE created their profile page in March 2012, while CONFENIAE created their profile a year later. Each organization is also associated with smaller profiles, both with Lanceros Digitales ECUADOR, which will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, and for CONAIE with INFORMATE PUEBLO…COMUNICACIÓN ALTERNATIVA, PACKAKUTIK ECUADOR,[76] and Movimiento Indígena del Ecuador. CONFENIAE's only other associated profile is with Juventud Confeniae, the youth branch of the organization. All these

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[76] This is the profile of the Indigenous political party originally associated with CONAIE. The use of all capitals for these profiles reflects the way the names are written out online.

interconnected pages like, comment, and reshare posts from the other organizations, with CONAIE resharing posts from CONFENIAE particularly frequently.

Each of the official profiles is extremely active. CONAIE has over 28,000 page likes and followers, while CONFENIAE has over 13,000 likes and followers, also a high level of involvement for a regional organization.[77] Both organizations post regularly, CONFENIAE posting slightly more often. Sometimes there are multiple posts made each day, depending on the events currently taking place, and the level of activity that the organizations are undertaking on the ground. All of the posts recently, and an overwhelming majority in general, are posted with some visual element like a photo or video. In place of photos, CONFENIAE in some cases posts images of documents related to interactions with the government, or with other organizations, though something is always linked to written posts. Posts are also typically associated with at least one hashtag. CONAIE frequently uses #SomosCONAIE,[78] often in conjunction with hashtags more specific to what the post was related to, such as those linked to ongoing campaigns. All of this activity is run by the Communication Directors of the organizations, posting and managing the official accounts largely through their mobile phones during the course of each day.

Social Media Platforms: Twitter

All social media platforms in Ecuador except Facebook were decreasing in popularity throughout the time period of the research, as shown in Figure 3.4, though they do still play a role in the communication systems of Indigenous organizations. In explaining the uses of the different online platforms within the structure of CONFENIAE's overall communication strategy, Andrés Tapía described Twitter as being helpful for linking to other organizations and outside allies, and to develop campaigns (personal interview, November 13, 2017). Twitter has the benefit of allowing organizations to rapidly spread information outside of their immediate networks, and the algorithms in the platform can sometimes be used to their advantage by using associated hashtags to create links with other campaigns, and by varying hashtags to raise posts in the feed.

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[77] In comparison, the Andean regional organization ECUARUNARI has under 900 likes and under 1000 followers, while the coastal regional organization CONAICE has only about 400 likes and followers.

[78] #WeAreCONAIE

The ability to use hashtags to create coherent campaigns is one of the most useful features of Twitter as a communication platform.[79] The use of hashtags allows supporters to find new information about an ongoing situation, providing an easy way to search for or receive alerts for updates, as well as drawing in additional supporters when multiple hashtags link a campaign to associated issues.

Both CONAIE and CONFENIAE have a variety of accounts associated with their organizations. Three of the five accounts connected to CONAIE seem to be used in an official capacity: CONAIE (@CONAIE_Ecuador), Mujeres CONAIE (@MujeresCONAIE), and JuventudConaie (@JuventudConaie). The first of these, the main account for the organization, was created in June 2010 and has been consistently used since then. Though the frequency of use depends on the activities that the organization is pursuing at a given time, it is used multiple times per day during large campaigns. CONFENIAE similarly has more than one official account for the organization: CONFENIAE (@confeniae1), and Juventud Confeniae (@JConfeniae). The main CONFENIAE account was created in April 2013, and despite having fewer followers than CONAIE's, it is much more actively used.[80]

The other two CONAIE accounts are used much less often, indeed Mujeres CONAIE has not been used since January 2019 and JuventudConaie was last used in January 2018. These accounts cater to specific segments of the organization, women and youth respectively, and tend to post about events specifically oriented towards those segments. The secondary CONFENIAE account on the other hand, was only created in September 2018, and has been used as recently as October 2019. CONFENIAE has an extremely active youth division, so their high level of activity is not surprising.

[79] There are a large number of examples of the use of hashtags by CONAIE and CONFENIAE, one of which, #SOSPuebloShuar, will be discussed in the following chapter.

[80] As of the time of writing, CONAIE has a total of 43.1k followers, while CONFENIAE has only 10.4k followers. On the other hand, CONAIE has a total of 16.7k original tweets, compared to CONFENIAE's 25.9k original tweets. These totals have accumulated from the creation of each account, despite the difference in the date of creation only reinforce the validity of the points: CONFENIAE has a more active account despite a smaller membership and more recent account creation.

There are a number of other accounts for each organization that have either fallen out of use, or that seem not to be under the control of the organizations' leaders or communication teams. Conaie (@Conaie1), for example, was created recently in October 2019 and has only tweeted twice in reaction to the current protests against austerity measures in Ecuador. The account CONFENIAE (@CONFENIAE), created in 2010, saw similarly limited use after it was created. These accounts may be created by someone representing the organizations without being privy to the control of the organizations, or may be created by someone completely unassociated with the organizations. Other accounts, such as Mujeres CONAIE (@MConaie), confeniae2015-2018 (@Confeniae2015Dr), Juventud CONFENIAE (@ConfeJuventud), and LA CONFENIAE (@ConfeniaeOF) seem to have been created at various points to represent the organizations in an official capacity either by leadership who did not know of the other accounts' existence or because they didn't have access to the other accounts. With new leadership voted in every four years, it can be difficult to maintain a single account from one directorship to the next. Accounts like these are also examples of two issues that emerge through social media use by Indigenous organizations: first, that large numbers of accounts with similar names can make it difficult for potential supporters to identify official sources of information from the organizations; second, that organizations can be misrepresented by outsiders using their name or hashtags.

Social Media Platforms: YouTube and Flickr

Visual media plays an important role in the communication practices of both CONAIE and CONFENIAE, with both organizations maintaining profiles on YouTube and Flickr. Each of the websites allows data to be shared through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. It is important to note that videos can be shared from any YouTube profile, which means that many videos are not posted directly by the organization itself, but may be linked to either CONAIE or CONFENIAE through hashtags and/or may be shared by the organization after they are posted by supporters. The second important factor is that Facebook has included video functions since 2007 as well, with the option of live streaming available since 2015. These features have decreased the importance of external sites for video publication for use on social networking platforms, but they have the drawback of all of the media relying on a single source. Many more videos are posted now by CONAIE through Facebook Watch than are currently posted through YouTube.

There are three channels associated with CONAIE on YouTube, one of which, CONAIEVideos is historic and has not been used since April 2011. This historic channel was created in January 2010, and consistently used to post a total of 122 videos during its nearly year and a half span. The popularity of these videos ranged widely depending on the topic, with one video reaching as high as 19,699 views.[81] For over a year this was the official and heavily used channel for CONAIE. The second CONAIE channel, Conaie Comunicación, was started in September 2014, over three years after the final video was posted on the previous channel. This channel is still in use, and is now described as the official channel of the current CONAIE directors – elected to serve from 2017-2020. 94 videos have been posted to the channel to date, with the last posted in June 2019. At the time of this writing CONAIE is not posting videos on YouTube from the major events occurring, despite videos being present on other social media, which seems to support that this is not the most highly utilized source for sharing videos. Much like the previous channel, this one has a wide range of popularity for videos, ranging from below 100 views to as high as 12,752.[82]

The final channel connected with CONAIE, Conaie Comunicaciones, appears not to be official despite using the official logo of CONAIE for the profile, rather to have been created as a way for someone to share videos from the 2019 Nacional Strike on behalf of CONAIE. Sharing only one video created at the time of writing, this account has no subscribers and only a few views. The video also does not seem to be made in the style typically used by CONAIE, which typically share interviews with members or live video taken during an event, rather featuring spliced segments of videos taken from other sources. CONFENIAE has a similar account, Confeniae Amazonia, which has no subscribers and only four videos. This account seems to be a personal account though, as all of the videos focus on family life. Each of these is an example of the ways in which official organization names can be easily used without their permission online, increasing the difficulty for organizations to present a well-planned identity.

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[81] This video was an introduction of Kichwa artist Sairy Llegaro's first book during the *X Festival Internacional de Cine y Video de los Pueblos Indígenas*: https://youtu.be/67AmUImoCSc.

[82] This video, posted in November 2015, showed the impacts of the Chinese Ecsa mine on the local environment and communities: https://youtu.be/Fjw2gpkD6fc

CONFENIAE is associated with two other YouTube channels: Confeniae Oficial and Comuni CONFENIAE. The first of these was only used to publish two videos shortly after it was created in December 2016, both from a single event calling for dialogue and peace between Indigenous peoples and the government. The second of the profiles was first used in August 2015, with the first video documenting the abuses of government forces against Indigenous people during a national strike. Neither of these channels has been heavily used, however, as the Comuni CONFENIAE, despite being used fairly consistently over the course of four years, this channel has only posted 13 videos, ranging from under 100 views to two with over 1000 views. This channel also, while used *consistently* is not used *frequently*, with videos typically posted months apart.

Flickr is a social media platform designed specifically for sharing photos, but that has declined in frequency of use as other cloud storage options have risen in popularity. Briefly used by CONAIE, it now seems to have fallen into less frequent use in much the same way that YouTube has for both organizations. There are three Flickr profiles associated with CONAIE, two of which were both created in March 2010 and were out of use by April 2011: CONAIE and CONAIE_Ecuador. Both of these older profiles featured the same profile photo, a logo that is no longer used by the organization. The first of these only shared 45 photos and was followed by 7 people, while the second of these shared 365 photos and was followed by 21 people. The final of the three profiles, Conaie Ecuador, has been much more heavily used. Created in June 2015, this profile has 876 posted photos and only 13 followers. This profile is still occasionally active though, and was last used in January 2019. As mentioned previously, and like the YouTube videos, many of these photos are linked on the official CONAIE website.

Though there is no profile for CONFENIAE, there were 67 photos associated with CONFENIAE in a keyword search, mostly posted by the final profile of CONAIE, by the *Asamblea Nacional de Ecuador*, and by the Ecuadorian communication organization Wambra Radio. Nearly all of the photos linked to CONFENIAE were taken during large events that were jointly organized with associated organizations, providing an example of the way relationships on social media platforms can provide representation that is not directly controlled by the organization.

Conclusion

Both CONAIE and CONFENIAE have responded quickly to changes in available communication technologies, harnessing new tools as they are developed and gain popularity throughout Ecuador. Changes in their own communication structures logically follow trends in wider Ecuadorian society, but also reflect constraints that emerge from the geographic and financial challenges common to Indigenous peoples in remote communities. The long-standing lack of Internet access at CONFENIAE's headquarters in Unión Base is a good example of these limitations, and the ways in which access to technology can have a direct impact on the communication choices being made. While CONFENIAE aims to use the communication methods that can give them access to the most supporters, they acknowledge the need to target different audiences with different communication methods.

Communication for these organizations has become a constant activity, in an attempt to maintain the flow of information both internally and to the outside world. The organizations' constantly updating social media profiles are not necessarily the official face that is turned to the outside world though, with a somewhat more defined image being offered through their official websites. These websites are carefully designed, with the presentation of background information and organizational history considered and revised on a regular basis. Not every item posted to social media is deemed acceptable for the more official persona of the organizations.

While CONAIE and CONFENIAE have both responded to the growth of social media by actively embracing it's use, the organizations have not yet deeply evaluated these social media platforms for the way that the technology itself impacts representation. The potential issues created by these platforms, including the emergence of knowledge silos, the impact of algorithms, and the control over and mining of personal data, are just beginning to be acknowledged and discussed, for example during the *Encuentros Nacionales de la Comunicación Comunitaria* that will be discussed in chapter 6. Youth have embraced these platforms partly for the deals that they are receiving for using them as communication platforms on their cell phones, but that situation could easily change. The reliance on these platforms for all kinds of representation and organization may be creating future issues for CONAIE and

CONFENIAE that cannot be foreseen at this point, but which will need to be considered by the organizations.

The communication structure of both organizations also reflects a larger ethos identified at the beginning of this chapter, that while their online media may be informational and provide avenues to develop alliances, they nonetheless rely on a continuum of online interactions and on-the-ground actions in order for the representation to have real impact.

Chapter 4: Online Campaigns and the Example of #SOSPuebloShuar

Figure 4.1. Photo of the author's office on the University of Victoria campus. Photo by author.

During the spring of 2017 I sat at my desk on the University of Victoria campus in BC, sipping a cup of coffee as I began my daily scroll through the new posts from all of the social media accounts of CONAIE. This has become my morning ritual since returning from my first period of fieldwork in Ecuador, watching from afar as the political concerns and issues continued to develop while I sat at a distance. I had some contact with the CONAIE Communications Director, Apawki, but it was limited to occasional Facebook messages with short updates, focusing on when I was planning on coming back and what my plans would be once I was there.

This morning it was the repetition that caught my attention. I had known that I wanted to talk about what was happening online, not just what people said was happening online, and I had been looking for a hook, a way to describe this activity. I had been aware of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, which had started while I was in Quito, since my return to Victoria in February, it was just hitting me that this might be what I had been searching for. On this day in late March, it was the English that caught my attention, after so long scrolling through posts in a second language that exhausted my brain by the end of the day. I stared at the identical tweets sharing the petition from Amazon Watch, wondering, "what impact does this actually have on the visibility of a campaign?" Mostly I just wondered what these campaigns actually looked like on-the-ground in Ecuador. This was drama at a distance, requiring interpretation to determine what is happening from what is said.

The vignette above describes the general disconnection that I felt while carrying out my online research. While in Ecuador, even when I was having a difficult time building relationships with the participants for my research project, there was a feeling of having a more direct connection to the goals of the movement. For me, the Internet created a barrier that required me to interpret the online posts to identify the underlying issues that were being addressed by the campaign. Having direct knowledge of Ecuador—the current political situation, the issues created by the geography, the history of the organizations and their previous struggles—provided me with some insight, but did not create a sense of connection. My own sense of dissociation from the campaign is not abnormal, and one of the key debates around online activism is the level to which it encourages participation or dedicated involvement by people viewing or resharing posts through social media without a direct personal connection (Hemsley 2019). There is no consensus on the effectiveness of these methods, though some of the different perspectives are considered below.

This chapter focuses on the allowances of network forms related to the use of social media in cyberactivism, such as the dissociation described above. Allowances include both benefits and challenges, which need to be closely considered when examining this online form of protest representation. This chapter specifically considers the value of extending representation outside of a local or national network to successful online campaigns, drawing from some examples of

other movements and campaigns that have used online communication methods to increase their visibility and participation, and ending with an example of an online campaign that CONAIE and CONFENIAE pursued together during my research period, the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign.

Changing Patterns of Protest with new ICTs and Web 2.0

Approaches to Indigenous Digital Media Studies

Indigenous peoples are using new ICTs, particularly social media, to increase their representation to the wider public and pushing to receive rights and respect around the world.[83] These media provide opportunities to reach new audiences, while also allowing faster and more direct communication within and between Indigenous organizations and peoples to maintain and strengthen Indigenous cultures. The analytical frameworks used by scholars to understand how Indigenous media are created, viewed, and understood have developed alongside their appropriation of the means of representation to broad audiences. Within anthropology, Faye Ginsburg is one of the leading scholars of digital media use by Indigenous peoples, with research focusing on television, film, and digital representation (1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2018). Her work provides insight into the ways that Indigenously created media can be theoretically understood, with consideration for the challenges faced by Indigenous media producers, and the value of viewing media creation as an act of media sovereignty (Ginsburg 2008).

Ginsburg has extensively analyzed the different conceptual models used to analyze Indigenous media and the issues that are presented within each. The first of these conceptual models, the Faustian Contract model "regards 'traditional culture' as something good and authentic that is irreversibly polluted by contact with high technology and media produced by mass culture" (Ginsburg 1993, 560). This is clearly related more strongly with the outside imposition of media viewing on Indigenous peoples, and has largely been discredited within academic analysis of media creation; however, it is still widely present in the views of Indigenous media by the general public. Ginsburg contrasted the Faustian Contract with the Global Village model

[83] The reality of whether Indigenous peoples have successfully claimed their basic human rights—let alone rights based on traditional relationships to territory—is up for debate, as the growing visibility of hierarchical forms in the Americas has made evident. Though there has been an international increase in the recognition of these rights (with, for example, the introduction of UNDRIP in 2007), the governmental respect for these rights is far from universal.

developed by McLuhan (2003[1964]), which "optimistically suggests that new media can bring together different cultures from all over the world, creating a sense of community, one associated with village life, through progressive use of new communication technologies" (Ginsburg 1993, 561). While still present in some analyses of current media development, this model is also problematic in its extreme view of the power of communication technologies. Ginsburg prefers a more situated analysis, such as that found within Arjun Appadurai's idea of "-scapes", and specifically the "mediascape" (1990, 296). This concept places media technologies within broader social and political situations, allowing them to be viewed in relation to other factors that inherently change their effect in specific local circumstances.

Visibility and Representation

As was briefly discussed in Chapter 3, the major changes that occur with the recent development of ICTs stem from the patterns of production and consumption of media. The development of communication technologies, like mobile phones and interactive media options, have had a significant impact on the ways that protest movements are organized and given visibility. All of the benefits and drawbacks that apply to ICTs in general are accentuated in social media. With the creation of media no longer limited to a professional class of broadcaster or publishers, or alternately limited to small-scale production, anyone with access to the necessary technologies can become a media creator (van Dijk and Poell 2013). This has undeniable benefits to community organizers, allowing them to bypass the requirements of newsworthiness (van Dijk and Poell 2013, 6-8). The benefits mostly relate to increased visibility and representation directly from the perspective of the movement and campaign organizers, providing more accurate cultural representations of Indigenous peoples. The drawbacks on the other hand relate to the lack of control offered through social media, including the ventriloquism of others using a hashtag. Additionally, the need to modify a message for a larger response can also be a challenge when balancing the desire to draw wide interest in a campaign and the need to accurately represent conflicts without primitivizing or romanticizing the peoples that are being represented.[84]

[84] I intentionally choose to use the word "balancing" here as decisions of what and how to post are intentionally made and often require careful considerations about how the organizations will be viewed. While CONAIE and CONFENIAE do not explicitly vocalize these choices in terms of "primitivizing" or "romanticizing," they do carefully

It is not inevitable that all representation by people who are not members of Indigenous organizations will miss the point that the organizations are trying to make, but it is important to think critically about the ways that representation can be co-opted by outsiders – intentionally or not – for their own causes. This brings about the need to acknowledge a fact raised by Ginsburg – that the assumptions made of the democratic nature of representation in the "digital age" are largely ethnocentric and presume a level of access not necessarily available in all areas of the world (Ginsburg 2006). Since 2005 the United Nations has been attempting to remedy this "digital divide" through their "Digital Solidarity Fund," however "which digital technologies might make a significant difference and for whom and with what resources" were unclear even when Ginsburg was writing three years after the introduction of the Fund (2008, 287). Access to digital technology is now a major factor in representational decisions, and one that also affects organizations internally, as is often the case for CONAIE and CONFENIAE. In this context, it is important to keep in mind the statistics of Internet access that I mentioned in Chapter 3, and in the map showing mobile data access in Figure 1.2. Within Ecuador estimates of Internet access range from 57.3% in 2018 to as high as 81% in 2017, including mobile and hardline Internet connections (Freedom on the Net 2018; Internet World Stats 2017). These statistics do not provide any insight into the levels of access to ethnic minorities, however, which obscures the difficulty that many Indigenous peoples living in remote regions have in gaining access to these technologies. The lack of Internet access at the CONFENIAE headquarters was evidence of this challenge, and highlighted the practical and financial barriers to having the infrastructure installed. With these limitations come a narrowing of representational opportunities, particularly for communities in the Amazonian interior. This effectively results in a system where representation becomes centralized into the hands of organizational leaders and members who live in or travel to urban centers where they have better access to ICTs. Without better mobile data access there are communities that may not have the opportunity for direct self-representation.

Networking and the Power of Viral Communication

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consider whether they think a particular message will lead to higher levels of support. Often this means highlighting traditional relationships to land.

Social media sites allow for greater networking capabilities, connecting protest movements and organizations to a wider range of individuals or groups that can offer additional support. To increase the networking capabilities offered by social media, organizations and movements pay attention to the potential virality of their posts. A viral post is one which follows "epidemic-like" spread across social media platforms (Eanes 2020). Viral communication can function to encourage participation in a campaign and, reflecting wide sharing of posts. John Postill (2014) identifies four distinct types of virality that impacts communication by organizations and movements: campaign virals, viral campaigns, niche virals, and sustainable virals. The first of these terms, campaign virals, refers to the use of individual items related to a campaign, such as slogans, memes, photos, hashtags, etc., which circulate quickly and become associated with the campaign (Postill 2014, 58). Often these are hashtags or slogans that quickly and effectively identify posts on social media as connected to a particular campaign, which can be used to rally supporters at specific points in a campaign, but that can also still be linked to changing realities. For example, as a campaign develops, new slogans or hashtags may be used to continue drawing attention within the framework of Twitter's algorithm (Postill 2014, 57). The second term, viral campaigns, refers to an overall campaign that becomes widely known after the spread of these various items (Postill 2014, 58). Campaigns require the rapid spread of many campaign virals in order to be considered a viral campaign. Niche virals and sustainable virals are subsets of the items produced as part of overall campaigns. Niche virals are items that may spread rapidly within only a small subset of the supporters of a campaign, but that holds a large amount of importance within that sub-group. Sustained virals are items that maintain their appeal past the end of a campaign, often because the item can be reinterpreted for other campaigns (Postill 2014, 61-2). These various forms of virality help to identify the different impacts of social media on campaigns, and the ways in which the spread of information can impact the effects of a campaign.

Researching Online Protests

Studies of online protests tend to focus on one of two areas, statistical analysis of overall trends, such as a breakdown of all posts made with a specific hashtag (e.g., Xu and Luttman 2020; Deal et al. 2020), or detailed analysis of a few representative posts (e.g., Penney 2016). A few online studies combine these two approaches, providing both an overview of the hashtag, as well as

examples that can illustrate the points that the researcher is trying to make (Xiong, Cho and Boatwright 2019). Sometimes these studies are complemented with other forms of data collected during on-the-ground protest events that a researcher is able to attend, such as observation, interviews, or photos or videos taken by the researcher. These may be further supplemented by data collected from external sources, including news media (Boone, Secci and Gallant 2018).

Exploring Online Protest

Movements vs. Campaigns

Within this research I make a distinction between movements and campaigns in order to help differentiate between the types of communications used by organizations. The continuous daily communication used to maintain the struggle of ongoing rights-based protests is described as a movement, while the short-term communication strategies used to address immediately concerns are identified as campaigns. The term "campaign" is often used in reference to either politics, prior to an election, in military contexts, or in advertising.[85] I have chosen to use the term campaign in the context of collections of related social media posts because it typically refers to a collection of communication strategies with a specific goal or within a specific time-frame, and is often subsumed under larger goals. In the case of a political campaign, for example, there is a focus on a specific candidate in a specific election rather than on the overarching beliefs of an entire party. This distinction is useful in better identifying the communication strategies CONAIE and CONFENIAE use to promote their regular goals, and the specific reactions to issues that need to be addressed through short term actions. Most of the examples discussed below can be considered movements rather than campaigns because of their broad-based goals and diffuse timelines.

Movement Examples

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 3, there are a wide range of examples of protest movements that have been ignited and enabled online, including the Arab Spring, and the Occupy movements (Tufekci 2017; Husted 2015). Other examples of movements using online communication in similar ways include the 15M movement in Spain, the democracy movement in Hong Kong, and

[85] https://www.dictionary.com/browse/campaign

more recently the Black Lives Matter movement (Postill 2014; Wetzstein 2017; Edrington and Lee 2018; Ince, Rojas and Davis 2017). Each of these movements utilize social media to expand their support base, and to increase the visibility of their message to a wider population through connection to other media sources, such as news networks and journalists. At the time of writing this thesis, most of these movements, though they have not necessarily ended, have faded from public prominence. All of the above examples united large swaths of the population, often with very disparate interests that could be integrated under a single unifying banner. The Occupy movement is a good example of this phenomenon, with the protest beginning on Wall Street in New York City demanding the elimination of corporate interest from the United States political system, but which morphed over time to encompass a broad range of demands in countries around the world that can be roughly categorized as 'anti-capitalist,' 'anti-global warming,' 'anti-racism,' and 'anti-war' (Husted 2015, 161; Lang and Lang/Levitsky 2012).

The Idle No More movement in Canada is one of the best examples of an Indigenous movement harnessing the power of social networking. Beginning with a focus on environmental protection and issues of community consent on reserve lands in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, but expanded to include broader focus on Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization (Hiltz 2014).[86] Following the proposal on October 18, 2012 of Bill C-45[87] a group of four women in Saskatchewan began a movement that would quickly go viral and span the globe. This movement used social networking sites Twitter and Facebook for communication, with the first "tweet" posted on November 4, 2012[88] (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014). Involvement escalated, and by the time the Bill was passed on December 14, 2012, the movement had already reached international proportions with levels of solidarity similar to those for the Zapatista movement in terms of the global nature of online involvement, and in the frequency and intensity of events related to the movement. Between December 23- 29, 2012, the Globe and Mail

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[86] More information is available on the official Idle No More website here: https://idlenomore.ca/about-the-movement/

[87] Full text of the Bill is available here: http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5942521.

[88] The first tweet using #IdleNoMore was posted by one of the four organizers, Jessica Gordon, saying "@**shawnatleo** wuts being done w #billc45 evry1 wasting time talking about Gwen stefani wth!? **#indianact #wheresthedemocracy #IdleNoMore**" (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 390). The first on the ground activity of the movement was a teach-in held on November 10, 2012 to educate communities about the threats to the environment and to Indigenous peoples' rights posed by Bill C-45 (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 21-22).

reported that the hashtag #IdleNoMore generated between 19,000 and 23,000 posts each day (Duarte 2014, 57). Events associated with Idle No More, including further teach-ins, flash mob Round Dances, concerts, hunger strikes,[89] rallies and marches, reoccupations, civil disobedience actions such as blocking rail lines, and many others, were held not only across Canada or North America, but around the world. This was possible as the movement also broadened to consider a much wider range of issues, leading to an equally broad base of support (Kinew 2014, 96-98). Without the publicity potential and organizational capacity of social media websites it is unlikely that Idle No More would have seen such a high level of participation. While Idle No More is a perfect example of a broad Indigenous movement that harnessed online communication to increase the visibility of their messages, #NoDAPL provides a clear example of a campaign that sought to do the same thing.

Campaign Example

The #NoDAPL campaign had a specific intention of preventing the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, with a combination of actions on-the-ground and online.[90] Beginning following the announcement in March 2016 that the pipeline was going to be built across sacred Indigenous lands where it would also threaten the water supply at Standing Rock. The online activities of the campaign began to have a significant influence starting in September 2016, as the hashtag went viral, and the use of associated hashtags[91] widened the reach of the campaign over the media.

The campaign largely ended in February 2017, when the Standing Stone camp where water protectors were staging their resistance was shut down following President Trump's approval of the project or orders to expedite construction. The prevalence of the #NoDAPL hashtag during

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[89] Chief Theresa Spence of the Attawapiskat First Nation began the first hunger strike on December 11, 2012, asking for a meeting with Prime Minister Harper and a representative of the crown regarding treaty violations. Hundreds of other people held their own hunger strikes in solidarity throughout the six weeks (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 393). On January 13, 2013, Twitter users were also inspired to create the satirical hashtag #Ottawapiskat to describe the worst hypocrisy and irony in the capital (King 2014).

[90] A full history of the campaign, with particular focus on the media representation can be found here: https://www.nodaplarchive.com and https://moveme.berkeley.edu/project/nodapl/.

[91] Examples of other hashtags included #ReZpectOurWater, which was one of the first hashtags to be used related to the campaign, and #StandingwithStandingRock, which was used to demonstrate wider support for the campaign.

the campaign has resulted in that being the most common way in which the campaign is known on social media, alternately referred to simply as Standing Rock, particularly in the mass media.

Figure 4.2. Photo of the main office building at the CONFENIAE headquarters in Unión Base covered in banners from previous campaigns. The building also supports large sculptures representing people from a few of CONFENIAE's member nacionalidades. The shed and bathroom buildings are both covered in murals of the surrounding jungle. Photo by author.

It was only the second time I had visited the CONFENIAE headquarters outside of Puyo, and I had taken one of the guys who was currently staying there up on an offer for a tour. We wander through the many building scattered across the area, with him pointing out the uses of the buildings that are in use – the main office with the kitchen on the lower floor, the bathroom next to it, the covered area used for large meetings and sports matches, and the bunkhouse just up the hill. Beyond those buildings he points towards the community of Unión Base, where some of the leaders and most involved members of the organization live. We turn back towards the river, walking downhill. "Those buildings aren't used though, are they?" I ask him as we come nearer to a scattering of buildings that seem dilapidated. "Those are the buildings that were used when

this was the headquarters for CONFENIAE before," he explains, "Everything was like that when we moved back here from Puyo. We haven't remodeled all of the buildings yet, it takes a lot of time and money." We turn slowly, completing our circuit of the buildings with a view down to the river before returning to the main office. I pause out front, looking at the banners hanging across the front of the building, knowing that there are more along the sides and inside the meeting rooms as well. The banners are a physical reminder of the decades of campaigns that the organization has carried out. Many of the banners show slogans that have been used again and again, some that I have seen in campaigns online as well. The connection between the past and present is a constant presence in the daily life of CONFENIAE's members.

Online Campaigns by CONAIE and CONFENIAE

CONAIE and CONFENIAE have both used campaigns to coordinate their reactions to situations and events since the very beginning of their organizing. As discussed in the history of the organizations in Chapter 2, often these campaigns were in reaction to abuses by the government or corporations' extractive practices. Campaigns could take the form of marching, strikes, or blockading roads, and these forms of protest are still commonly practiced throughout Ecuador and continue to have massive impacts when they are carried out on a national scale.[92] With the emergence of social media platforms though, campaigns have moved into a hybrid form, allowing the organizations to use a combination of large-scale events with online visibility through social media networking.

The goals of the campaign I am going to discuss below is in reaction to a specific activity on the part of the government, and is subsumed under the larger goals of Indigenous rights movements throughout Ecuador. CONAIE and CONFENIAE's goals during the campaign were evident on social media, and included sharing evidence of abuses, developing support networks through hashtag use, and encouraging public involvement in the campaign, both online and during events. The organizations' uses of their official websites within their representational strategies have changed with the development of Web 2.0 technologies and the emergence of social media. Throughout this campaign the website publications mostly focused on static information,

[92] For an example of a recent use of this style of event used by CONAIE and CONFENIAE, see Chapter 8.

particularly official announcements and statements intended for use by mass media as well, many of which were shared as press releases.

#SOSPuebloShuar

There have been a large number of campaigns since I began researching CONAIE and CONFENIAE, ranging from local support to national mobilizations, but none has bridged these categories quite as effectively as the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign. The #SOSPuebloShuar campaign began following the escalation of a conflict over mining rights of the Chinese company, EXSA, in traditional Shuar territory. In December 2016, the Ecuadorian government declared a state of exception to allow the involvement of the army in the region. Within initial posts from the campaign, starting on December 16, most included photos and videos showing movements of government troops into the territory. Originating from the CONFENIAE Twitter profile, the post was quickly shared on the official CONAIE profile and on the CONAIE Communication Director Apawki Castro's profile. Other organizations closely affiliated with CONAIE and CONFENIAE, such as Wambra Radio and MICC,[93] quickly began sharing the news as well. This campaign largely ended in early 2018, when the hashtag was no longer associated with the specific struggle to resist the EXSA mine.[94]

I collected the data that is discussed in this section during the spring and summer of 2017, and early in 2018 on Facebook and Twitter, but chose to focus the bulk of my analysis on the Twitter data. I chose to focus on the Twitter data because it provided a way to easily look at campaign data that I might not have had access to on Facebook. Facebook users have a much stronger expectation of privacy than Twitter users, and often limit the visibility of their posts friends. Twitter on the other hand is viewed as a much more public forum, with greater accessibility to posts that are not direct friends. Twitter also provides easy access of data collection through their API features, allowing researchers to search for and assemble information based on a specific

[93] Wambra Radio is a small community media organization, based out of Quito and largely focused on radio, *Movimiento Indigena y Campesino de Cotopaxi* (MICC) is a small regional movement based in the Andean province of Cotopaxi, to the south of Quito.

[94] There was some continued use of the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag during the following years, including an update on the second anniversary of the initial use of the campaign. Most recently, the hashtag has been used to highlight the connection between mining in Shuar territory and the introduction of COVID-19 to Shuar communities.

hashtag. The data was analyzed in two ways: 1. Pulling the data from each of the tweets into Excel and PowerBI, allowing for quantitative analysis based on the available categories, and 2. By capturing individual tweets throughout the campaign, either because they demonstrated key points in the campaign, or as examples of general trends in the campaign.

Narrative Analysis

In addition to a statistical analysis of the tweets that use the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag, I focused on the narrative that was created by the tweets over the course of its use. From the beginning of the campaign through to the end of the hashtag's use, the online activity of the campaign reflected and supported the other actions that the organizations were taking. The goals of the posts were to increase the number of participants at some of the events that CONAIE and CONFENIAE organized, to share information about developments in the conflict, and providing an easy way to coordinate among the various supporters. In this way, the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign is a perfect example of the close relationship between online and offline events in protest campaigns. Online communication practice and social media posting provides a window into the progression of campaigns, demonstrating the reactions to information posted by the organizations, and the impacts of appeals to supporters from the wider public. It is also important to note that Facebook and Twitter provided similar insight into the narrative development of the campaign, with frequent duplication of the posts by the organizations across their social media platforms. Though the posts between the two platforms are the same, there may be other differences that are not easily identified. The intended audience, for example, is much more focused on Facebook and tends to be comprised of people who are much more directly connected to the organizations. This may mean that they would be more likely to engage with the posts through comments and other interactions. So, though the ease of using the Twitter API for research was a major factor in the choice of which platform I would research, it may also have impacted the conclusions that I was able to reach.

Campaign Social Media Presence

The campaign was carried out beginning on the social media platforms of CONFENIAE, including posts on both Facebook and Twitter beginning on December 16, 2016. SOS Pueblo Shuar developed into separate Facebook and Twitter profiles shortly after the #SOSPuebloShuar

hashtag began to be consistently used for the campaign. There was some overlap between the posts using #SOSPuebloShuar and posts from the SOS Pueblo Shuar profiles. The SOS Pueblo Shuar profile only posted 65 tweets using the #sospuebloshuar hashtag, out of a total of 200 tweets. It is not advertised who is in charge of the account, but CONAIE, CONFENIAE, and all of the supporting organization within their network are included within their 484 followers.

On Facebook, there is heavy overlap with the #SOSPubeloShuar posts on Twitter, largely providing a second platform for sharing the same information, often duplicating the same posts. Facebook posts likely had a different intended audience, however, as this is the platform most frequently used by both CONAIE and CONFENIAE to communicate with their members.[95] These posts would then have been shared within the extended friend networks of members and supporters, but are not as publicly visible as Twitter posts, as most of the Facebook posts by supporters have limited access due to users' privacy settings. Similarly, to the account on Twitter, there is an SOS Pueblo Shuar community page on Facebook with 1215 followers. Additionally, there is a public group under the same name, which was created more recently, but it was not in use during the research period.

Analysis of Tweets – Narrative Analysis

The original post shared by CONFENIAE on December 16, 2016 is shown in Figure 4.3, which included the video that was the first piece of evidence of the conflict between the Ecuadorian government and the organizations.

[95] As communicated in interviews with both Apawki Castro and Andrés Tapía. Likewise, CONAIE members identified Facebook as their preferred method for gathering information about what was happening within the organization (personal interview with CONAIE member Mario, January 9, 2017).

Figure 4.3. Post from CONFENIAE, including a still capture of the original video showing the Ecuadorian government entering Shuar territory during the state of exception. Text reads: MaximumAlert: communication to the national and international community of the imminent repression of the Shuar community with military armaments.

Following the initial postings, the #SOSPuebloShuar quickly rose into the top 30 most used hashtags in Ecuador. By early afternoon it had become the third most used hashtag, and became the most used hashtag by the end of the day. With slight variation over the course of the next few days, #SOSPuebloShuar remained within the top 6 most used hashtags within Ecuador.

In the days following the initial announcement of the campaign, a wide range of tweets came out exposing the impacts of the police presence in the region. Some of these impacts were social,

such as displacement of the local populations and the loss of services such as education. The most damaging impacts were from the direct violence being perpetrated by the military.

Throughout these early days of the campaign, there were a number of events held in Quito in support of the impacted Shuar communities. Many of the events were designed to gather supplies that the communities needed, while others were protests in direct support of the campaigns. These events were planned on short notice, with announcements circulating widely through social media networks, which were then used to post photos after the fact. The tweet shown in Figure 4.4 illustrates this style of event, with large numbers of participants. Social media was utilized both before and after the protest, first for the coordination of the event using posters and announcements to gather the supporters, and second to share photos of the event during and after the fact.

Figure 4.4: Tweet posted by Wambra Radio showing a protest in support of the Shuar. Text reads: University students join the protests organized in the Plaza Grande.

On December 20, the Ecuadorian government shut down the environmental organization Acción Ecológica's activities within the country, which inspired a large number of tweets reacting to the ban and calling for support. This created an indelible link between Acción Ecológica and the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, which continued throughout the remainder of the main conflict between CONFENIAE and the government. During the next days, support poured out for both #SOSAccionEcologica and #SOSPuebloShuar, largely through the use of photos of supporters holding signs with the two hashtags written on them. The staff at the environmental organization Amazon Watch's headquarters in the United States, for example, responded on December 21 with the group photo shown in Figure 4.5. Similar tweets were posted from a range of other organizations and from many individuals. While not directly affiliated with CONAIE and CONFENIAE, Amazon Watch has been amplifying the organizations on their website since 2001, and subsequently on social media as well.[96] Many of these posts and blogs were written by staff from Acción Ecológica, a clear demonstration of the way in which representation expands outward in CONAIE's campaigns, moving from Ecuadorian organizations to International organizations. Amazon Watch represents many organizations in the same way, acting as an umbrella organization for environmental organizations in other parts of the world, bringing their demands to a North American and European audience.

[96] This amplification is not always direct, meaning that they do not necessarily use materials created by the organizations. Since they are creating their own materials the messaging can be different, and may emphasize different issues (e.g. a focus on environmental rather than community concerns).

Figure 4.5: Tweet from the Amazon Watch Advocacy Director, showing the whole team at the headquarters.

Many of the Shuar leaders were imprisoned due to their actions of resistance, which led to the creation of a number of tweets protesting the use of incarceration in cases of peaceful protest. The first arrived on December 21, following the arrest of the FICSH leader Agustín Wachapá during the government raid on the FICSH headquarters. Claudio Washikiat, FISCH Vice-president was also arrested on February 21. Wachapá was finally released on April 25, 2017 after a number of protests calling for the decriminalization of protest. It did not end with the release of Wachapá though, and calls for decriminalization for the leaders and protesters continued after, as is shown in Figure 4.6 in another of the tweets from Amazon Watch.

Figure 4.6: Tweet from the Advocacy Director of Amazon Watch sharing support for the leader Agustín Wachapá who was being detained by the Ecuadorian government.

All of the support from the large national and international NGOs is demonstrated in tweets from organizations like Amazon Watch evolved with the more major events such as the shutting down of Acción Ecológica and the criminalization of the Shuar leaders. This meant that the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign was picked up by the large NGOs on December 21, 2016. Amazon Watch and the Sierra Club both created petitions to support the Shuar based on the environmental impact of the mining within their territory. These petitions were posted on the websites of the organizations and shared through their social media platforms. Anyone who signed the petition was after provided with a link, allowing them to share it through various social media platforms. Nearly all of the tweets linking to the Amazon Watch petitions were then liked by the Amazon Watch main account and by Andrew Miller, the Advocacy Director of Amazon Watch, very few had more than these two likes. Other petitions were also created as well, including petitions on change.org in both Spanish and English. Most of the petitions were advertised by CONAIE and CONFENIAE, which inspired more participation than the petition

tweets from other users. The number of tweets related to these petitions also waxed and waned, though they were generally tweeted at least a few times during each week, reflecting on the other events occurring in conjunction with the campaign. These tweets mostly tapered off by the end of March 2017, with only sporadic use over the course of the summer.

The impact of famous actors on the interest and involvement of people who were not previously supportive of the campaign. One example can be seen in a retweet from Mark Ruffalo's account, showing him and Leonardo DiCaprio supporting Amazon Watch during a march, shown in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Retweet shows an original post from Mark Ruffalo of him and Leonardo DiCaprio at a march in support of Amazon Watch, encouraging people to make donations to an Amazon Watch fundraiser.

On January 6, Jared Leto, an actor known for his roles in Dallas Buyers Club and as the most recent Joker in the Suicide Squad among many other movies and TV shows, posted a photo of himself with a sign showing the two hashtags #SOSAcciónEcológica and #SOSPuebloShuar, shown in Figure 4.8. This was the tweet with the highest number of comments, shares and likes of all of the posts using the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag. Reactions to the post began immediately, in a mix of Spanish and English, reacting both positively and negatively to the post, as shown in the replies in Figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11. The tweet also linked to Amazon Watch, resulting in many more signatures on the petition. Later the same day, CONFENIAE made an announcement about the support from Leto.

Figure 4.8: Tweet shows Jared Leto holding a sign reading "#SOSAcciónEcológica #SOSPuebloShuar" and encouraging people to sign the Amazon Watch petition.

· Jan 6, 2017

Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch

you don't even know what's going on there bud. Stop trashing my country.

2

· Jan 7, 2017

Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch

you've been fooled man. These "protecters" look for overthrowing the government supporting crimes against the..1/2

· Jan 7, 2017

Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch

... ecuadorian law enforcements. You have to analyze it thoroughly also from the other point of view too. 2/2

Figure 4.9: Some of the negative replies to Jared Leto's tweet are shown, including comments reflecting badly on the Indigenous people.

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
you are amazing my love 👍😱😘😘 i love you..💋❤️

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto
love you Jared
1

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
omg

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
Thanks for always caring about the world! And that's a nice pic! 😘

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
wow

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
Absolutely!

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
Message sent! Thanks for spreading the word @JaredLeto

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
AHHHHH
3

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
5:19 PM · Jan 6, 2017
I LOVE YOU

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
te amo

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
hi

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto and @amazonwatch
YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL BABY
1

· Jan 6, 2017
Replying to @JaredLeto
I love you
1

Figure 4.10 and 4.11: These show a sampling of the positive responses to Jared Leto's original tweet, most of which are simple comments sharing appreciation of Leto himself and for his involvement in the campaign.

This entire campaign occurred during an election year, with the result that many tweets looked for reactions from the presidential candidates. Each of these linked directly to the Twitter account of the politician, for example, the president's account @MashiRafael. The other major candidates, including @Lenin who was eventually elected as the new president, also received links in many of the tweets.

Support from international organizations, such as the United Nations (*Organización de las Naciones Unidas* - ONU in Spanish), began in later December and continued throughout the remainder of the campaign. Other organizations also offered their support throughout the campaign. For example, the Indigenous organization CIDOB from Bolivia offered their support on January 9, 2017, while AIDESEP from Peru provided their support on January 15, 2017. When the Women's March occurred in Washington DC on January 21, 2017, a large number of supportive tweets were posted, many of which included photos of people holding signs showing the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag. As the campaign developed international support, comparisons with Standing Rock emerged as another unifying factor to other organizations. While the first was posted on December 16, the main comparisons were made beginning later in December.

On January 12, 2017, the state of exception was extended, allowing further military involvement of the Ecuadorian government in Shuar territory. After the increase in military presence in January, Shuar women arrived in Quito for a ceremony on February 1, 2017, sharing the reality of them being expelled from their territory. Photos of the ancestral ceremony that they held with the women in the CONAIE's headquarters were prevalent online. There were two spikes in the popularity of the hashtag after December, the first briefly on January 16, 2017, which boosted the popularity into the top 30 hashtags. The second spike occurred on the morning of February 1, 2017, following the women's press conference.

Being heavily involved through large numbers of tweets does not necessarily reflect a strong impact within the support network. The accounts of two supporters exemplify this trend: PIT BECKER and Apoyo Yasuni both tweeted and retweeted many times throughout the course of the campaign, but neither had a large number of likes, retweets and quote tweets, or comments. Some tweets can also have a negative impact by using the hashtag. For example, one tweet read

"Alerta contra las mentiras de @AmazonWatch stop attacking #Ecuador @MashiRafael https://t.co/raSVniDJeg @cumanda_e #sospuebloshuar liars!!".[97] Tweets like these may detract from the impact of the campaign, reflecting poorly on the organizations. Research on the impact of counter-movement hashtag use is extremely limited, though there is some evidence that the prevalence of counter-movement hashtag use increases as the visibility of a movement increases on social media (Ince, Rojas and Davis 2017, 1827). The small scale of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign may mean that countermovement use of the hashtag was inconsequential, but it remains an important factor to consider in broader studies of campaign design. Level of visibility, in combination with the impact of knowledge silos, may make counter-movement tweets irrelevant to a campaign of this size.

Towards the end of the major use of the campaign, the tweets emphasized the escalation of violence within Shuar territory. CONFENIAE posted tweets providing evidence of grenades and the burns that they caused for community members. Figure 4.12 shows some of these tweets, which were retweeted by other supporters.

[97] The tweet translates to: "Alerta against the lies of @AmazonWatch […] #sospuebloshuar liars!!" The first of the two accounts linked at the end of the tweet is President Correa, and the second appears to be a supporter of Correa. Link to tweet: https://twitter.com/hcpdf/status/822009912301645824

Figure 4.12: Both tweets refer to violence in the Shuar community of Nankintz. The first tweet reads: #LastMinute: the rights of the Shuar people are being violated. 40 families and 150 people displaced after #Nankints. The second

reads: CONFENIAE and CONAIE denounce the violation of human rights in Shuar territory #SOSPuebloShuar #NankintsResiste.

While the campaign almost entirely ended in the Fall of 2017, there has been sporadic use of the hashtag due to continuing minor conflicts in the region. Most recently, #SOSPuebloShuar has been used to bring attention to employees from the Canadian mining company currently working in the region for introducing COVID-19 to the nearby communities.

Analysis of Tweets – Statistics

The vast majority of the tweets were standard tweets (not those associated with a Petition tweet) in Spanish. Out of a total of 5253 tweets, 3751 tweets were in Spanish (71.41% of tweets), 1333 tweets were in English (25.38%) and 169 tweets in other languages (3.22%). Most of these tweets were original posts, as can be seen in Figure 4.13, which shows a breakdown by tweet categories.

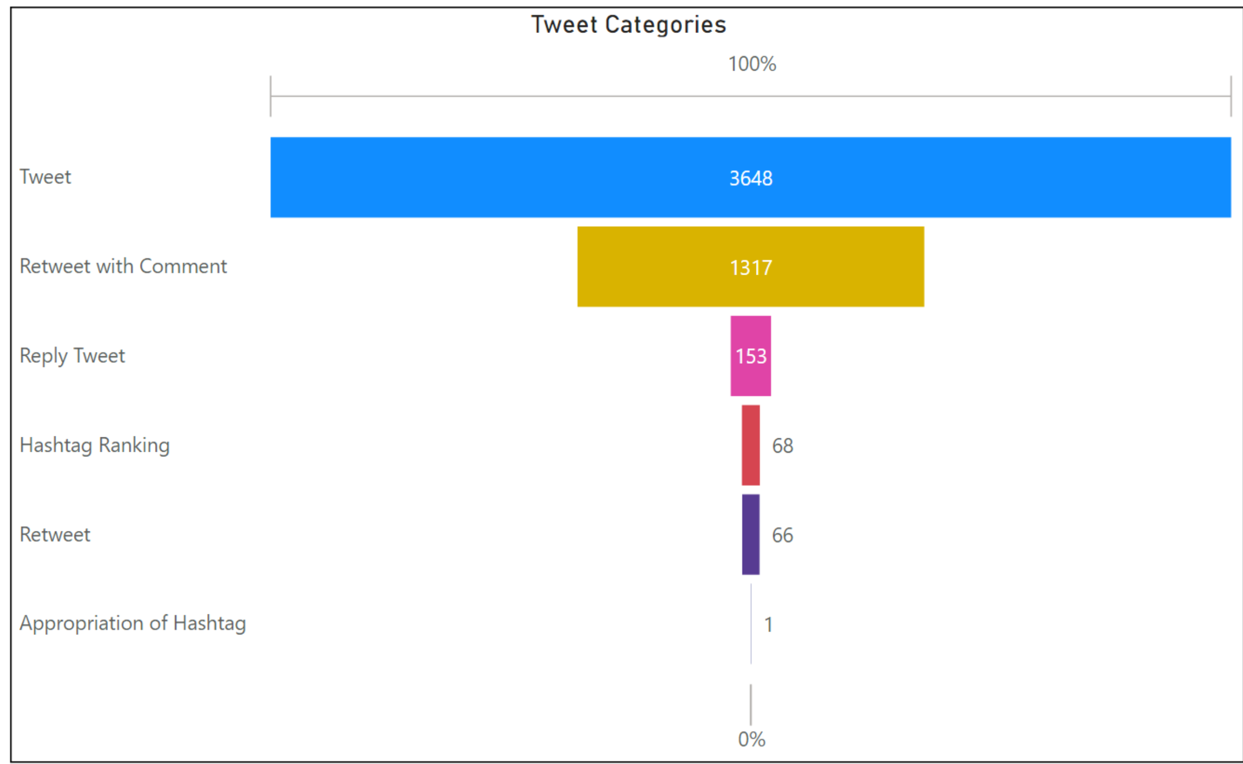
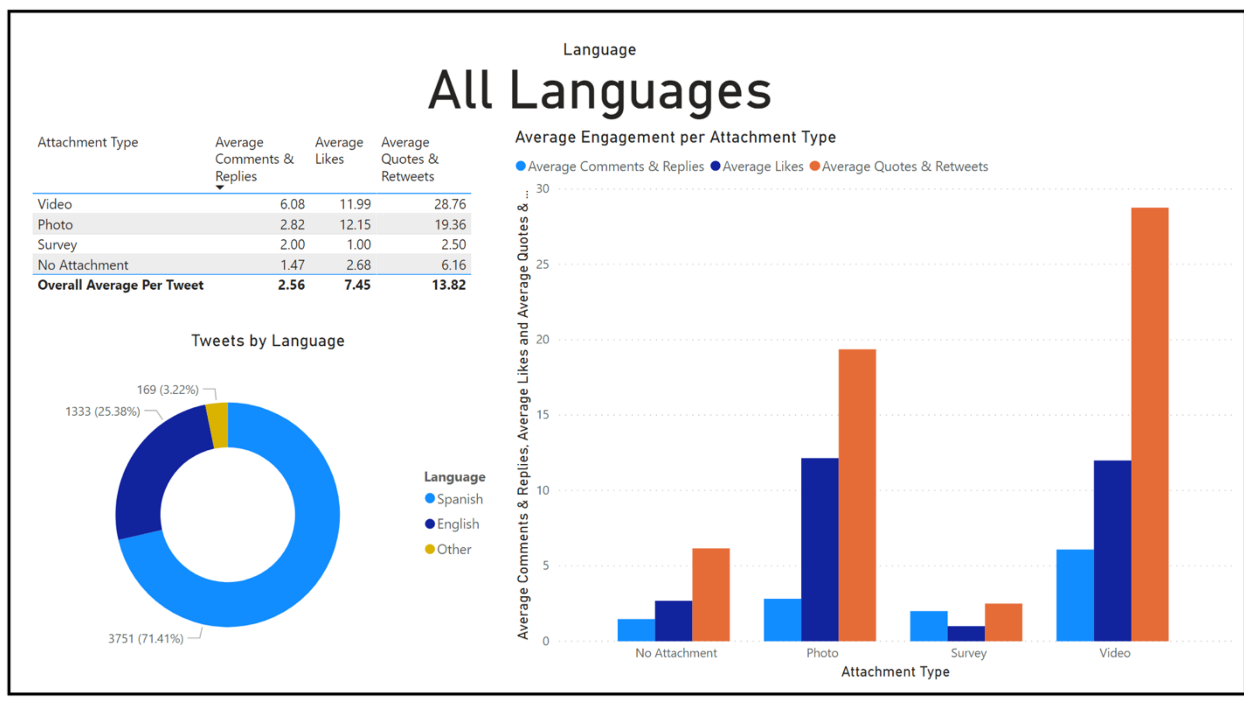


Figure 4.13: Chart showing a breakdown of all #SOSPuebloShuar tweets by the type of tweet. Regular tweets are by far the most common, comprising 3648 out of a total of 5253 total tweets, which includes the tweets linking petitions from organizations like Amazon Watch.[98]



Attachment Type	Average Comments & Replies	Average Likes	Average Quotes & Retweets
Video	6.08	11.99	28.76
Photo	2.82	12.15	19.36
Survey	2.00	1.00	2.50
No Attachment	1.47	2.68	6.16
Overall Average Per Tweet	**2.56**	**7.45**	**13.82**

Figure 4.14: Shows a breakdown of the tweets posted in each language, also providing the average engagement with different types of attachments. Spanish comprises 71.41% of the total tweets, English 25.38% of the total tweets, and other languages 3.22% of the total tweets. With all of the tweets taken into consideration, those with photos and videos have higher average engagement than those without attachments or the few that had a survey attached.

Tweets related to the petitions posted by large NGOs were a fairly large proportion of the data, accounting for 671 total tweets (12.77% of the total tweets), shown in Figure 4.15. Most of these received very little interaction from supporters, though those that were posted by CONAIE and CONFENIAE, as well as their various directors received the most interaction, the details of which can be seen in Figure 4.15.

[98] "Tweets" contain original content or are direct posts, "Retweets" are direct repostings of original posts by other users, "Retweets with Comment" add original material to the original posts of other users. "Hashtag Ranking" are posts tracking metrics of hashtag use within Ecuador and while useful analytically, are not contributing tweets for analysis. Likewise, "Appropriation of Hashtag" refers to tweets which are not contributing material for analysis.

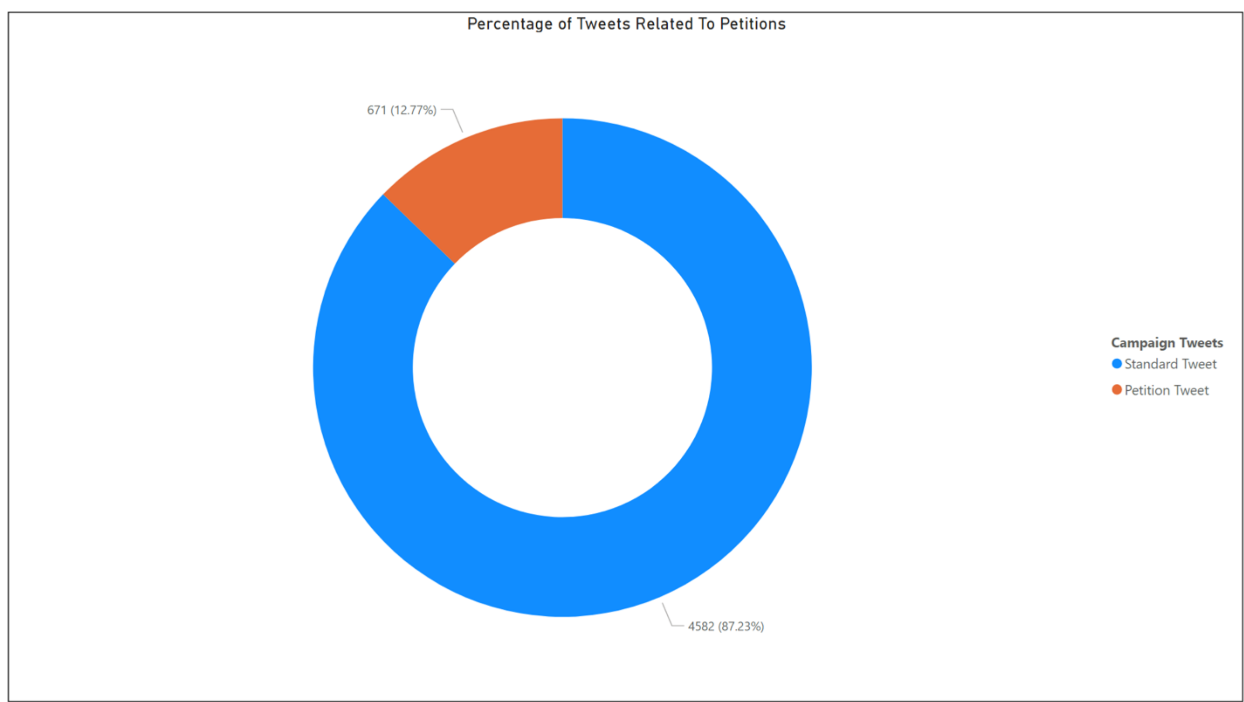


Figure 4.15: Percentage of tweets associated with petitions: of the 5253 total tweets 671 (12.77%) were associated with petitions.

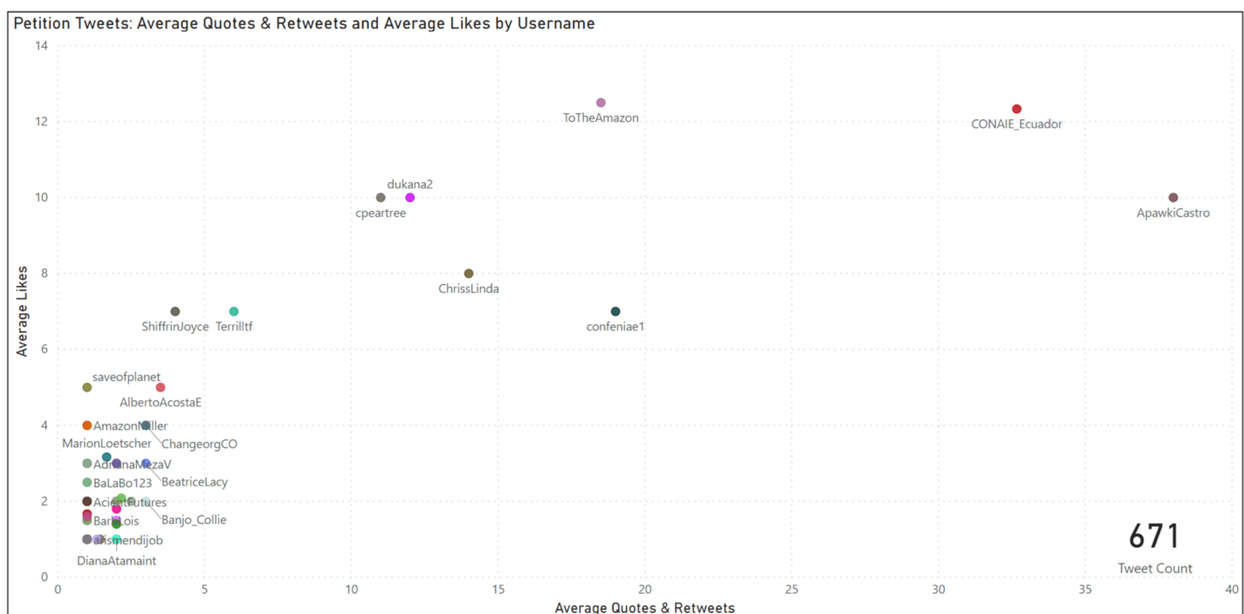
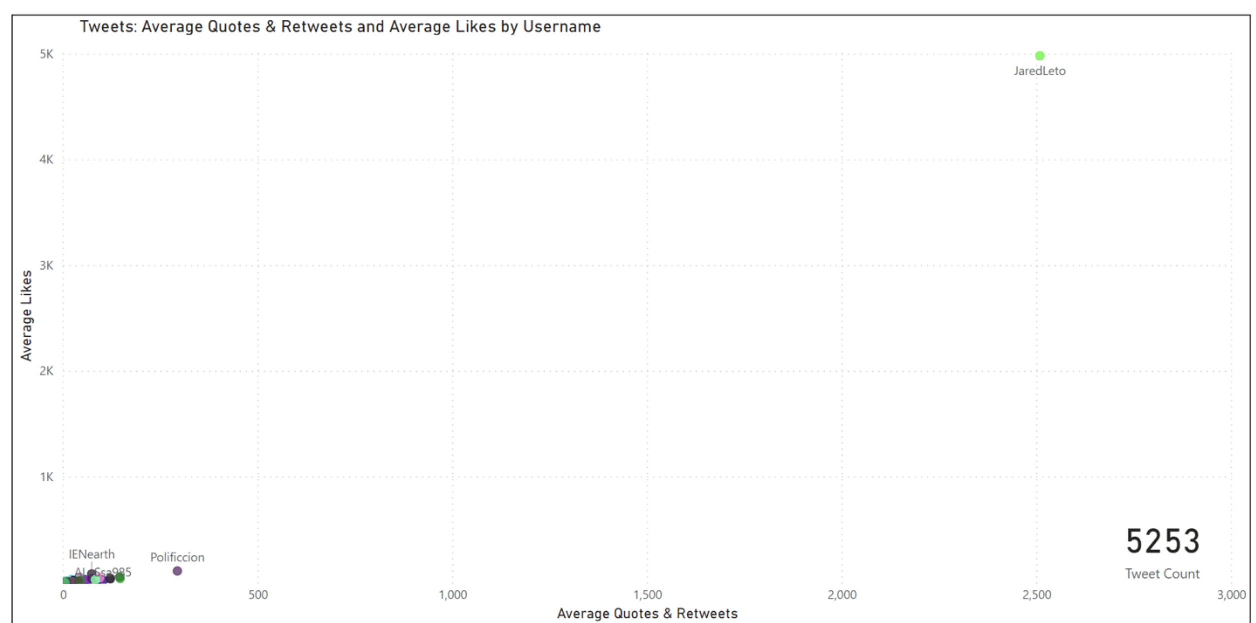


Figure 4.16: Scatter chart showing the average likes and quote tweets/retweets for the petition tweets shared by username. As the chart demonstrates, those posted by CONAIE, CONAIE’s Communication Director Apawki Castro, and CONFENIAE were among the petition posts that received the most engagement. The vast majority of petition tweets received limited engagement.

The involvement of celebrities increases the involvement, and increasing the participation of a wider group of people is evident in the Figures 4.17 and 4.18. Jared Leto received a significantly higher number of likes and retweets, skewing the data significantly. When Leto is removed as a data point there is still a significant range of involvement with different twitter users, but the range is much less significant, demonstrating the quantitatively low level of involvement in campaigns like #SOSPuebloShuar. The impact of these tweets cannot be evaluated based purely on the numeric data, as the interactions by local supporters may be much more meaningful. As was seen in the narrative description of the campaign above, many of the responses to Jared Leto's post were superficial and the commentors were unlikely to offer additional support.



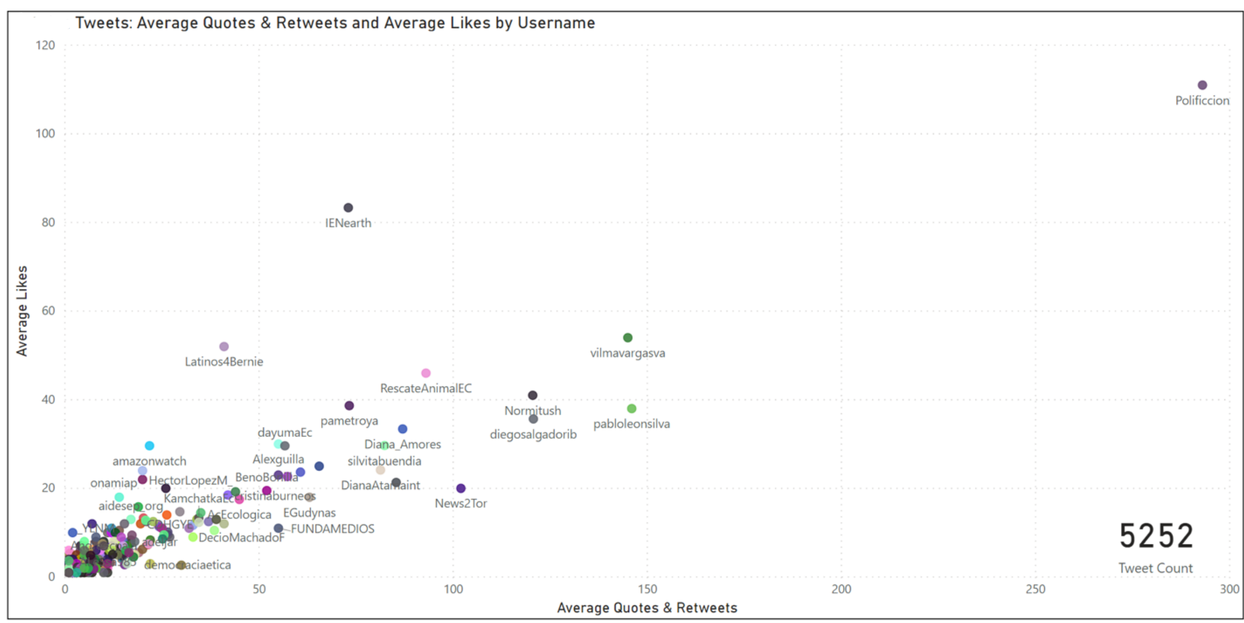
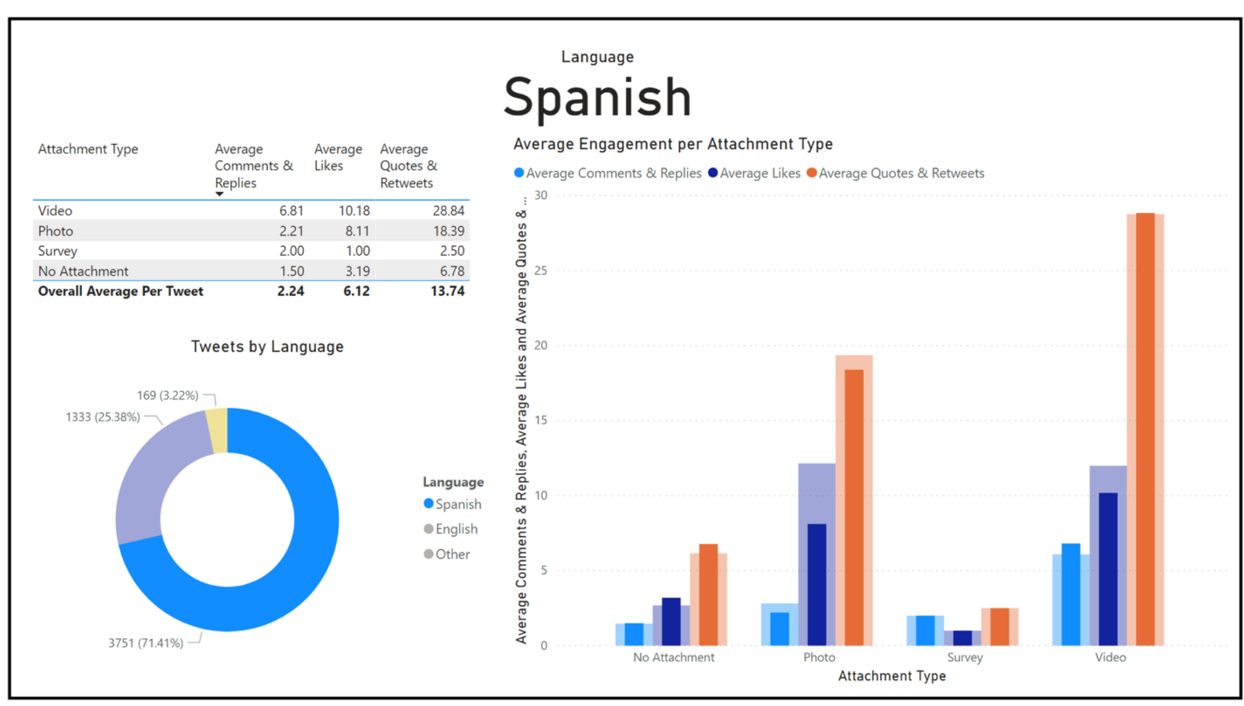


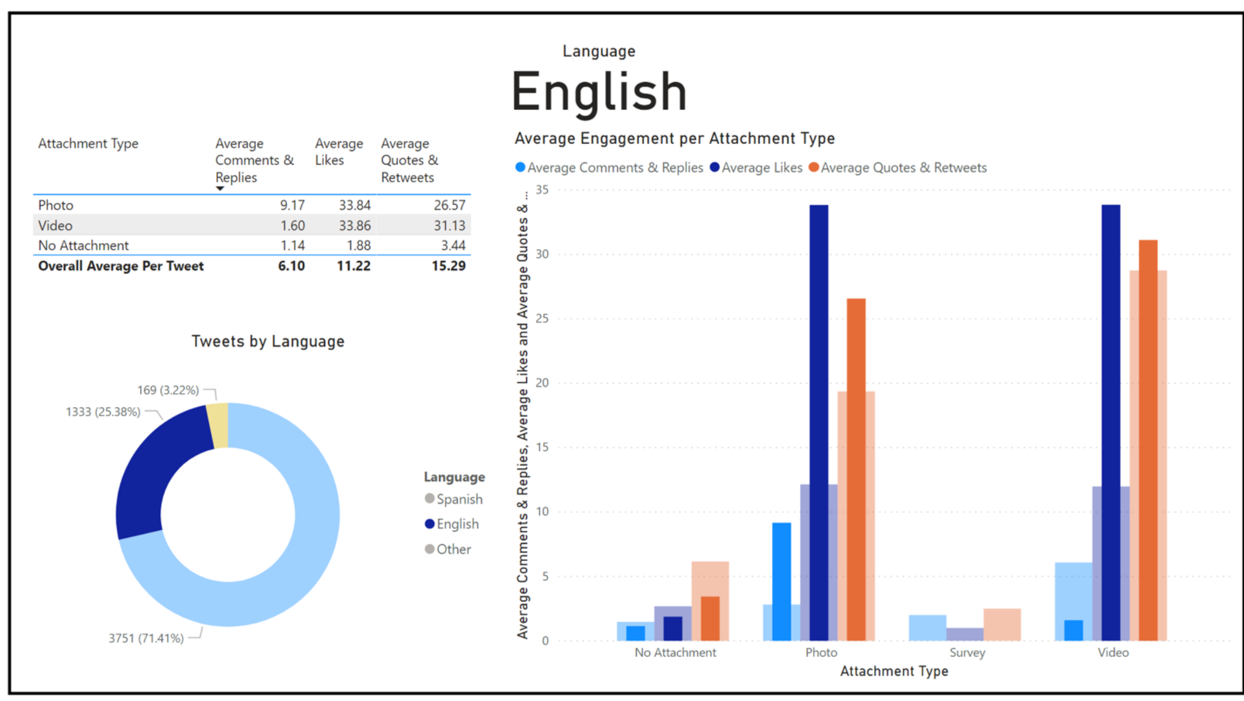
Figure 4.17 and 4.18: Charts show the average like and retweets by username, first with Jared Leto and second excluding Leto. The difference between these two charts helps to demonstrate the way that a single post by a celebrity can skew the data on engagement.

This analysis has also provided insight into the impact of various visual attachments on supporters' involvement with tweets. The use of static visuals (including photos, campaign posters, memes, etc.) and videos has a large impact on the engagement of users viewing. The data includes records of the number of comments and replies, the likes, and the quote tweets and retweets for each of the posts, providing some insight into the various interactions that each of the tweets received. Overall, photos and videos increase all categories of engagement, though there is some variation based on language. The Spanish tweets with images receive engagement that almost directly reflects the overall levels of engagement, with only a small decrease in engagement for the tweets with photos, and a slight increase for tweets with no attachments. English engagement, on the other hand, is much more strongly influenced by the presence of attachments. Static images have significantly higher engagement in all categories, particularly likes. Videos also have significantly higher likes, as well as slightly higher quote tweets and retweets, though fewer comments and reply tweets. Other languages have significantly lower engagement overall. Figures 4.19 and 4.20 show the variation in the data divided by Spanish and English. This difference between Spanish and English engagement styles speaks to the ways that the organizations can tailor their campaigns depending on their target audiences. For engagement

within Ecuador, direct statements about the developments of a campaign may be all that is needed. When seeking engagement and support from outside of Ecuador, for example if the aim were to increase international pressure against human rights abuses, visuals help to create higher levels of engagement for English speaking audiences.



Attachment Type	Average Comments & Replies	Average Likes	Average Quotes & Retweets
Video	6.81	10.18	28.84
Photo	2.21	8.11	18.39
Survey	2.00	1.00	2.50
No Attachment	1.50	3.19	6.78
Overall Average Per Tweet	**2.24**	**6.12**	**13.74**



Attachment Type	Average Comments & Replies	Average Likes	Average Quotes & Retweets
Photo	9.17	33.84	26.57
Video	1.60	33.86	31.13
No Attachment	1.14	1.88	3.44
Overall Average Per Tweet	**6.10**	**11.22**	**15.29**

Figure 4.19 and 4.20: Impact of attachment types divided by language, demonstrating the greater relative impact of visual attachments on engagement with English tweets.

Conclusion

Social media campaigns provide opportunities for organizations to develop much wider visibility and participation, outside of their typical supporters. By reaching international audiences and building the networks established through linked accounts and hashtags with broad appeal, CONAIE and CONFENIAE have potentially expanded the impact that they can make for sustained change. The campaign virals created in the context of a campaign have a large impact on the level of involvement that can be developed, as is seen in the higher amount of participation created both by the use of visual attachments and by the involvement of celebrities.

The involvement of these celebrities speaks to the international nature of the Twitter data that I chose to analyze. The choice to analyze data from Twitter had an impact on the type of data that I uncovered, influencing the conclusions that I was able to reach. While CONAIE and CONFENIAE originated the campaign, including fueling each stage of the narrative as they released information throughout the campaign, it moved beyond them to other rights-based organizations in Ecuador and the Amazon, before being picked up by North American environmental organizations and then to their supporters. Twitter provides a level of international visibility that would not be possible through Facebook, connecting CONAIE and CONFENIAE to an international network of organizations and extremely visible celebrity supporters.

There are a few allowances of form that influenced this pattern of growth in the campaign. It is important to remember the issues related to accessibility within Ecuador. Many people access social media through their phones, and often mobile data plans include access to certain social media apps, but these are most frequently Facebook and WhatsApp. I do not remember seeing an advertisement for Twitter access with a mobile data plan during my research in Ecuador. Each of these social media platforms functions as a network form with distinct allowances, which influence the extent of the network that forms and the types of nodes that develop. Twitter is often seen as a platform oriented towards public commentary, and many of the most common

posters of the campaign were organizations and public figures. These official announcements about developments related to the campaign, often posted by the Communication Directors of CONAIE and CONFENIAE, received some of the most meaningful engagement. Members of CONAIE and CONFENIAE were more likely to use the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag on social media to coordinate their participation in events within Ecuador, rather than to make public statements. Without seeing the impacts of these events on-the-ground it is impossible to know the impact that these posts had.[99]

Chapter 5 will continue to consider the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign as an example, focusing on some of the visual attachments used as campaign virals including campaign posters, as well as memes and reposted comics. Providing an analysis of the different types of images used, visual attachments will be considered in light of their role in challenging hegemonic power structures and increasing the visibility of the campaign.

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[99] For example, posts about donation drives to support the families displaced during the conflict may have had a large impact, but it is impossible to know based purely on the information that was available through social media.

Chapter 5: Visual Communication and the Power of Memes

Figure 5.1. Photo of the meme workshop offered by Omar Rincón during the fourth *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria* at the Facultad de Comunicación Social (FACSO) of the Universidad Central de Ecuador (UCE) in Quito. Photo by Andrés Tapía.

We all chuckled at the screen as the speaker clicked through a series of memes, reading the text for all our benefit in the darkened conference room. He seemed to be avoiding any overly political content in the context of this event, instead focusing on showing us how to make an impact on people as effectively as possible. The key messages seemed to be keeping it simple, using humor, and referring to things everyone could understand. Omar Rincón, had been speaking about the power of memes for about half an hour as one of the workshops for the fourth Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria, and after a few examples he asked us to download an app that he recommended, and then try making a couple of memes for ourselves. As we shared them with each other a couple of things became obvious to me: 1) people love making fun of people in positions of authority (as numerous memes of the communication directors Andrés and Apawki seemed to be demonstrating), and 2) I had to work on my ability to understand sarcasm and irony in Spanish.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3. A photo taken during a part of a visual media workshop, and the poster that it was eventually used to create using the free mobile application Poster Maker. Photo and poster both by author.

"Espera un momento… y… perfecto." I finally released my friend Mateo from his pose as I checked the photo I had taken on my phone. He lowered the camera and hesitantly asked what I was going to do with a photo of someone taking a photo. "Verás" I said simply, smiling.
It was two months after the Encuentro Nacional and I was standing in a large room with over 30 other people, all of us participating in a workshop dealing with communication. My own portion of the workshop was already over, with a focus on photography skills for the organization members from CONAIE and CONFENIAE. Now I was there to learn alongside the rest of the participants and enjoy the opportunity to see some new techniques for teaching visual communication. We were working on the creation of digital posters, images that could be used online to advertise events or campaigns and that would be punchy enough to capture attention. As I layered text and applied filters to my image, forming a poster to advertise my photovoice workshops, I realized how pervasive these visuals were becoming.

These two events had a powerful impact on my understanding of the role of visual media in the communications of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. It has become rare for either of the organizations to make a major post on social media, particularly Facebook where they most frequently post materials for the members of their organizations (as opposed to outsiders), without some visual element. Visual media has been shown to offer additional interest and attraction to content on social media. Within Chapter 4 we saw that the inclusion of visual elements increased the engagement of users on social media, particularly those who speak English. Visual media play an important role for the organizations when they are telling their story, acting as evidence, emotional connector, and humorous criticism to draw in supporters to their network. These building blocks help to shape and establish the networks that the organization seek to use in the creation of a spectrum of actions, from the local goals of drawing crowds for events to the development of international support when speaking for Indigenous rights in an international forum.

This chapter explores the uses of visual media, beginning with a consideration of the growing presence of the visual within social media, then moving on to a discussion of the uses of visual communication in protest movements and the way it has evolved to an online platform, next

considering the ways in which the visual can act as a form of routine resistance, finally ending with a consideration of specific examples of visual communication that have been posted on social media related to CONAIE and CONFENIAE's campaigns.

Words Are Not Enough – the Importance of Image in Online Protest

The emergence of social media and new ICTs have provided a platform that deeply entwines a wide range of communication forms, providing opportunities to link written, visual and audio formats within a single post. As was shown in the discussion of the data in Chapter 4, the inclusion of videos and images has a positive influence on the level of engagement with posts, increasing the interest of social media users. It was argued even before the boom of social media that "all media are mixed media," but the visual is taking an increasingly prevalent role in linked image—text communications (Mitchell 1994, 5). The visual seems to provide something that cannot be attributed to written descriptions, requiring an act of interpretation on the part of the viewer and a reliance on the context in which it is found to fully understand its meaning (MacDougall 2020). Where a description may not make a strong impact on a viewer then, images may influence their perceptions, for example when images are used politically to sway public opinion. Lene Hansen's work on images of torture in Abu Ghraib is a perfect example of this, demonstrating the rise in public outrage following the release of images depicting the torture when previous written descriptions had a much weaker impact (2015).

In the context of ICTs and Web 2.0 productions, images and videos are becoming increasingly frequent forms of communication. Visuals have become almost ubiquitous across social media, providing a counterpoint to the words that were the earliest form of social media posts. Indeed, at the time of writing, even when posts are limited to text on Facebook, users have the option to add visual elements to the post, providing a background of a solid color or pattern, using special fonts, and decorating their words with "stickers" (https://www.facebook.com/help/1824001514537829). All of this contributes to the "pictorial turn" that has been increasing in speed with the development of visually based online communication structures (Mitchell 1994). Not only are images more prevalent in media consumption, but their production is becoming increasingly common and easy with the growing access to smart phones, photo editing apps, and social media (Miller et al. 2016). This ease of

creation has resulted in the exchange of photos becoming a major form of interactive engagement between social media users, and is becoming, as the media scholar Paolo Favero so aptly described in his work on interactive visual technologies, "a space in which new identities, tastes and alliances are shaped: in which consumers can transform themselves into active producers and citizens can attempt to exercise agency upon the world surrounding them" (Favero 2014, 166).

One of the most recent additions to this visual ensemble is the emergence of memes, which have become popular with the emergence of social media platforms allowing easy sharing of images. The term meme originally referred to any element of culture that was passed from person to person in a way that mimics viral transmission, as was outlined in Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (2016 [1975]), but it has come to describe images assembled from photos, words and drawings that usually have a satirical element which are then shared online. Memes may be constructed from original elements or may make use of recycled or stock images with new meaning provided by text. Regardless of the type of construction, rapid spread is essential for memes, allowing them to be consumed, passed on, remixed, and reinterpreted by new audiences (Knobel and Lankshear 2007). As was identified by the speaker in first vignette that opened this chapter, the other important aspect of a successful meme is the use of humor. Some examples of memes will be discussed below, as well as their role within protest.

Visuals in Protest

Much like the importance of visual content in the media, visual elements often play an important role in protest movements. Emblems, logos, and slogans help to organize and orient movements into a coherent whole and provide a method of recognition for identifying members of a group with shared views (Miladi 2018)[100]. Visuals have also played an important role in protests. The clenched fist is a good example of an icon that has been used in this way, though used before, the

[100] Political conflicts and war have long been events that inspire the creation of slogans and songs: La Marseillaise - French Revolution; "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids you kill today? – anti-Vietnam War. Likewise, cultural upheavals or attempts to create large cultural changes can also lead to the creation of slogans: Lips That Touch Liquor Must Never Touch Mine – US Prohibition; Think Global, Act Local – environmentalism.

raised fist has come to be strongly associated with the black power movement[101] through use by the Black Panthers in the late 1960s and 1970s, and seeing continuing resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement that is ongoing (Watkins 2012; Joseph 2016; Chidgey 2018). Another recent example is the use of the Pussy Hat for feminist solidarity, which despite criticism[102] became a strong visual icon (Larabee 2017; Brewer and Dundes 2018). Most successful campaigns have unifying visual elements that complement the written language used, and which then transcend their use as printed media through their implementation during events—as call and response chants, as posters and placards carried during marches, and as displays of solidarity outside of homes and businesses. These connections continue to hold that value, even while many of the solidarity displays now take place on social media in addition to on-the-ground.

CONAIE and CONFENIAE both use visual elements such as banners and placards during large movements such as uprisings and marches. Some of these symbols, such as the checkered rainbow, are traditionally associated with Indigenous peoples in Latin America, and function as identity markers to the broader population. Others are in reaction to specific situations, and help to create a unifying purpose to a particular event.

Visual Protest and Everyday Resistance

Resistance to hegemonic power structures does not necessarily require obvious or direct action. Within his work *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), James Scott identified the persistent forms of everyday resistance that are often used by people lacking power. In the Malaysian farming communities in which he completed his study gossip, social slights, work delays, and small acts of sabotage were all forms of resistance. Such small actions provide an ability to comply with hegemonic power structures (for self-preservation or the extraction of benefits) while also carrying out small forms of resistance (Scott 1985, 281-283). This form of resistance acts as a middle ground between complete conformity to the hegemonic structure and violent resistance, as Scott pointed out, "what is missing is the *massive* middle ground, in which conformity is often

[101] The first image of the clenched fist is often identified in a painting by Honoré Daumier from the French Revolution (1848), but it has seen extremely wide use by a wide range of campaigns and movements.

[102] The pussy hat movement was largely criticized for focusing attention on Trump's presidential election, and for overshadowing the needs and interests of BIPOC protestors – essentially white-washing the Washington DC Women's March in January 2017.

a self-conscious strategy and resistance is a carefuly [sic] hedged affair that avoids all-or-nothing confrontations (1985, 285, italics in original). Humour, such as that carried out in the gossip and social slights discussed by Scott, is one of the most powerful ways in which resistance can be carried out. Often this humor is now expressed through visual media. Reighan Gillam's recent study of "satirical antiracism" is a case in point (2021). Gillam analyzed a series of commercial-style YouTube videos created by a Brazilian family to criticize the racist representations of Black people in Brazilian television advertising. The videos avoid creating jokes at the expense of Black people, instead using parody to steer the humour to the ridiculousness of the social system that has led to stereotypical Afro-Brazilian representations (Gillam 2021, 47-48).

Memes are one of the most successful and highly reproduced forms of everyday resistance that can be found online. They are used by individuals pointing out the absurdities of daily life, as well as activists attempting to create support for their views. As Gabriella Lukács (2021) work on the memes used by O1G activists in Hungary shows, memes have an indirect role to play in the goals of movements and campaigns. She found that memes "did not disrupt the functioning of political authority, nor did they stimulate institutional change" (2021, 72). Rather, memes "transform the affective tone" of political activism, making it more accessible to people who would not be comfortable with more confrontational forms of resistance, and thereby creating more inclusive movements (2021, 72). Indigenous movements have also discovered the power of memes to influence public opinions and to subtly challenge power structures. In Australia, Ryan Frazer and Bronwyn Carlson (2017) found that Aborigines were using memes to counter hegemonic ideas of non-violent colonization and racist conceptions of Aboriginal peoples. They analyzed a series of memes that repositioned colonial violence from an Aboriginal perspective and acted as a way to make Aboriginal people and their history visible (Frazer and Carlson 2017, 10). The memes used during the #NoDAPL campaign provide an example of Indigenous peoples embracing the use of new ICTs and communication patterns on their own terms. Angel Hinzo and Lynn Schofield Clark (2019) approached the study of these memes through a perspective of Indigenous epistemologies, rather than beginning from a western scholars' perspective. This resulted in the understanding of Indigenous memes through the "Trickster figure […] embodied as Indigenous social media publics disobey established rules, challenging the settler state's notions of sacrality with Indigenous notions of the sacrality of land and water" (2019, 804).

Indigenous meme creators then "enact a form of digital survivance"[103] where representations of Indigenous people emphasize contemporary lived realities rather than freezing Indigenous peoples in the past (2019, 804). The unifying thread running through all of these examples is the use of memes as a humorous subversive medium to counter hegemonic power without requiring direct confrontation. These everyday forms of resistance can prove to be a more approachable way to begin building support for movements among the general public.

Online Protest Images in the #SOSPuebloShuar Campaign

As CONAIE and CONFENIAE's protests have moved into an online format alongside their on-the-ground actions, many of the visual elements seen in the latter have been directly translated into the online sphere. There are a number of different types of visual media being used, which I will consider in turn: images posted as evidence of what was happening in Indigenous territory, posters and other visuals that spread information about events and campaigns currently underway, campaign slogans and logos using limited words, and cartoons and memes presenting critical or satirical messages in relation to the treatment of Indigenous peoples. I identified these various types of visual media as I began collecting data for the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, and which I decided to research separately as they seemed to have an independent function and interest. While I attempted to be systematic in the compilation of the images, identifying which images are the most meaningful for research can be extremely difficult in the current media environment (as discussed by Roland Bleiker in his 2015 study of images in global politics). Images were gathered from the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag during the campaign discussed in Chapter 4, and were taken both from Facebook and Twitter, though many appeared on both social media platforms. I categorized the images as they were collected, making a note of their first appearance on social media, as well as the context in which they appeared. Images from each of the categories were then selected based on which seemed to best demonstrate that type of image and could provide a clear example for the description below, with preference given to those that were shared more frequently.

Images in Regular Posting and Images as Evidence

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[103] The term survivance is a combination of survival and resistance first used by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor in 1994 in relation to Indigenous storytelling traditions.

As images have seen growing importance on social media platforms, Indigenous organizations have increasingly used them to highlight the messages that they are sending. Often these images are acting as support of the wider message an organization is sending, or are used as evidence for what is happening in Indigenous communities. Figure 5.4 shows the original tweet posted to notify supporters of CONFENIAE of the military presence in the Amazon, including a still of the video of military vehicles entering the region. This tweet was also discussed briefly in Chapter 4, and while the remainder of the chapter focuses on the still images included in the campaign, this is an example of the value of videos as well, which can provide an additional impact showing more than the limit of a single image. Figure 5.5 through Figure 5.8 all show the Ecuadorian military entering the Amazon, where they eventually entered Shuar territory to support Chinese mining operations in the area. While these images do not guarantee support, they do provide evidence that can be used to further arguments either against the behavior of the government or to encourage additional support for the Indigenous communities. Sometimes these images were re-used as the basis for a meme, as happened with Figures 5.6 and 5.8, later shown as part of meme in Figures 5.41, 5.43 and 5.45.

Figure 5.4. Tweet from CONFENIAE, sharing a video of the first Ecuadorian military vehicles entering Shuar territory. Text reads: MaximumAlert: communication to the national and international community of the imminent repression of the Shuar community with military armaments. Tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/809788227007774720?s=20

Figure 5.5. Photo showing Ecuadorian military vehicles being moved into the Amazon. This image appears to be a still from the video posted in the Tweet shown in Figure 5.1. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by the communication organization Wambra Radio; tweet link: https://twitter.com/wambraEc/status/809807409074073601?s=20.

Figure 5.6. Photo of Ecuadorian military vehicles in the Amazon, being taken through a city centre. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONFENIAE supporter and user kaaretsa; tweet link: https://twitter.com/KaarEtsa/status/809819954208002049?s=20.

Figure 5.7. Ecuadorian soldiers walking through an Amazonian city centre. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/809869024062533632?s=20.

Figure 5.8. Ecuadorian soldiers lined up along the side of a highway in the Amazon. Billboard in the background reads, “When you buy, Ecuador first.” First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user tunamelera; tweet link: https://twitter.com/tunamelera/status/809882256328323072?s=20.

Andrés Tapía identified images, especially those that can be used for evidence of repression, as potentially problematic when we began to plan the photovoice workshops[104], stating that images showing organization and community members acting violently and videos with sound of members speaking rudely or aggressively showed the organizations in a negative light and were often used against the organizations. These were especially problematic when the images and videos were linked to CONAIE and CONFENIAE on social media, or if they were picked up in the mainstream media[105]. Figures 5.9 and 5.10, shown below are examples of photos that could be misconstrued, and have the potential to be used against Indigenous protestors by showing them in a violent light.

[104] These workshops are discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

[105] Interview completed on November 13, 2017

Figure 5.9. Photo showing Indigenous men carrying wooden spears confronting Ecuadorian military holding riot shields and dressed in military gear. An Indigenous leader in the background gestures and shouts to calm the men. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user lenhurtado; tweet link: https://twitter.com/lenhurtado/status/809906808764567553?s=20.

Figure 5.10. Photo of a riot shield and helmet smeared with blood. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user kevinhurlt; tweet link: https://twitter.com/kevinhurlt/status/809934537153200128?s=20.

Similarly, Figures 5.11 through 5.13 show a tweet that included what turned out to be problematic images and some of the reactions that it received. The photos show Indigenous children attacking an effigy of President Rafael Correa, the founder of the political party Movimiento Alianza PAIS (which is the 35th party listed on the Ecuadorian ballot and uses 35 in its emblem). Within Ecuador the New Year's tradition of burning effigies of prominent public figures, often politicians, is widely popularized, so the violent treatment of an effigy representing the current president is not an unfamiliar sight. This particular tweet, however, received a surprising amount of backlash. This is a clear example of the care that the CONAIE and CONFENIAE leadership identified as necessary for visual representations by the organizations.

These problematic images, as well as those that will be discussed later in this dissertation, contrast sharply with the positive representations of Indigenous cultures that are prevalent in internal communications and which are present around the organizations. The images of the CONFENIAE headquarters in Figures 3.1 and 4.2, for example, demonstrate the celebration of Indigenous culture in members' daily lives, while some of the images that are discussed in Chapter 7 highlight the elements of culture that the members seek to highlight themselves. It is rare to see images that can be negatively construed emerging within the organizations, as they are extremely careful of the way they are representing their cultures and tend to avoid controversial elements when creating media for a wide public audience. Andrés Tapía explicitly focuses on creating images that can productively advance CONFENIAE's goals, and sees these images as counterproductive since they can sway public opinion away from supporting Indigenous organizations.

Expresiones del Pueblo amazónico contra el gobierno de Correa fueron expresados en la quema del año viejo.

#SOSPuebloShuar

Translate Tweet

4:53 AM · Jan 3, 2017 · TweetDeck

18 Retweets **1** Quote Tweet **10** Likes

· Jan 3, 2017

Replying to @CONAIE_Ecuador

Enseñan a los niños a matar o herir con una lanza usando una figura humana. Vaya salvajes y asesinos!

1

· Jan 3, 2017

Replying to @CONAIE_Ecuador

siguen entrenando a matar los señores que la muerte es un juego, pero creo se les ha olvidado algo importante

· Jan 3, 2017

Replying to @CONAIE_Ecuador

que los mestizos también eran buenos en ese juego, no de gana miles de pueblos amazónicos ya no existen.

More replies

· Jan 3, 2017

Replying to @CONAIE_Ecuador

@confeniae1 No veo pueblo amazónico, veo niños entrenándose para matar, FUTUROS DELINCUENTES Y ASESINOS

1

· Jan 3, 2017

Replying to @CONAIE_Ecuador

de los niños?o las estupideces k tratan a inculcar a inocente infantes!El rechazo a asesinos ladrones extorcionadores!

Figure 5.11, 5.12, and 5.13. Tweet from CONAIE. This tweet shows two children poking an effigy of Rafael Correa with a wooden spear. In Ecuador, the New Year's tradition of burning the old year involves the construction of

effigies of prominent public figures by stuffing old clothes, which are then burned on bonfires at midnight. The tradition of burning the "old year" is intended to cleanse the bad that has accumulated over the year, providing a new beginning. Responses to the images include: 1) They are teaching children to kill or injure with a spear using a human figure. Become savage and murderous!; 2) They continue training to kill the gentlemen that death is a game, but I think they have forgotten something important; 3) [cont] that the mestizos were also good at that game, unwillingly thousands of Amazonian peoples no longer exist; 4) I do not see Amazonian people, I see children that they are training to kill, FUTURE CRIMINALS AND MURDERERS; 5) For the kids? Or the stupid things they try to instill in innocent infants! The rejection of murderous extortionist thieves! Tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/816251226450960384.

Posters and Event Images

This collection of images includes visuals created to advertise specific events, and the images that are most symbolic of these events after the fact and come to represent the event. This is one of the categories of image that is most often reshared, both before events as they are gathering support and after the event demonstrating the level of support that was on-the-ground. There are a few different types of events that are advertised in this way. The various protests that took place in the plazas around Quito, including the Plaza Grande in front of the Presidential Palace, were advertised by posters that were shared at least one full day before the event, encouraging greater participation by spreading news of the events throughout the organizations' support networks, connecting with university students, associated non-profits, such as those working for environmental causes, and other regional and Indigenous organizations.

SOS Pueblo Shuar

¡Respeto al pueblo Shuar! Abajo la militarización de la Cordillera del Cóndor, abajo la megaminería

lunes 19 // 12:00hs // Plaza grande

Figure 5.14 and 5.15. Two of the first posters designed for events associated with the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, advertising a protest in the Plaza Grande in front of the Presidential Palace in Quito. The text on the first poster reads, "Respect to the Shuar people! Down with militarization in the Condor mountain range, down with megamining" First instance of Image 11 found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by the organization Minka Urbana, who work against extractive industry in Ecuador; tweet link: https://twitter.com/MinkaUrbana/status/810513139888492544?s=20. Image 12 posted by Twitter user lucho_sanchez, a supporter of both Indigenous and anti-extractivist organizations in Ecuador, it is unclear who the original creator of the poster was; tweet link: https://twitter.com/lucho_sanchezg/status/810601173795348480?s=20.

Figure 5.16. Poster for an Assembly in Support of the Shuar Nationality, advertised by the organization Minka Urbana (an organization working against extractivism). Poster was created by Minka Urbana and shared over various social media platforms, first instance of the poster associated with the #SOSPuebloShuar hashtag was posted by the Ecuadorian anti-extractivist organization from their network Caminantes; tweet link: https://twitter.com/Caminantes_Ecu/status/810757611251437568?s=20.

Figure 5.17. Poster advertising a protest in solidarity with the Shuar nation in the Plaza de San Agustin in Quito on January 11, 2017. This poster was also created by Minka Urbana, and was posted by them on Twitter; tweet link: https://twitter.com/MinkaUrbana/status/818443190151872515?s=20.

The second set of events that were often advertised with posters were collection drives for material goods to support communities who had been displaced by mining. Figure 5.18 is a good example of the type of event these were advertising. There were a few of these drives throughout the course of the campaign, all asking for approximately the same items, and all associated with CONAIE, which would accept the donations. These donation drives did not have fixed conclusions, so the posters tended to be shared repeatedly over the course of a month or longer.

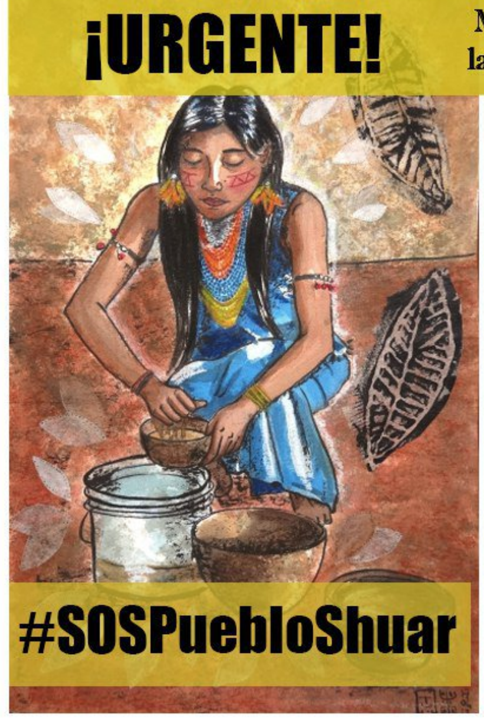

Figure 5.18. Poster calling for donations for Shuar women and children displaced by the militarization in Amazonian communities. The poster asks for the following donations for their time in Quito: clothing for women and children, blankets, toiletries, infant food, medicine, and diapers. Donations for the displaced communities: clothing appropriate for the Amazon for women and children, food (rice, tuna, oil, non-perishable foods), bottled water, first aid kits, shoes for women and children, and money in cash form. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONFENIAE, though there is no information about which organization originally created the image; tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/826255414664761347?s=20.

Many times, posters are related to other campaigns that are being pursued by the organizations at a given point in time, such as Figure 5.19 shown below. The interconnection of many issues means that a campaign cannot be clearly defined by a single hashtag, both increasing the potential connections that Indigenous organizations can make, as they find common interests with an increasingly broad range of organization types, allowing campaigns to capitalize on their intersectionality. Finding commonalities provides opportunities to add density to the network that develops online, offering potential connections between previously unrelated campaigns.

Figure 5.19. Poster associated with the "Resistance is my Right" campaign, which was created in reaction to the criminalization of Indigenous leaders who were resisting the mining concessions within their territories. This poster was calling for a protest in support of the Shuar leader Agustín Wachapá (shown in the modified image) who had been imprisoned for his protests. The #ResistirEsMiDerecho hashtag became more prevalent throughout the end of the main #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, when the related issues of criminalization of protest in general became much more widely discussed, and which began to impact Indigenous communities following the increased government crackdown in 2017. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONFENIAE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/826279082748952581?s=20.

Often the types of events that were distinct from the others that were held during the campaign had some of the largest response online. Often these events highlight intersectional aspects of the campaign. For example, the event for Shuar women outlined by the poster in Figure 5.20, created a spike in activity on Twitter during February following a lull when very few mentions were being made of the campaign. The ancestral ceremony associated with the event, combined with the press conference with Shuar women displaced by the militarization in the Amazon was an

event that did not get repeated during the campaign, though there were other ancestral ceremonies, including one outside of the prison of the Shuar leader Agustín Wachapá.

Figure 5.20. Poster for an ancestral strength ceremony of Shuar women, followed by a press conference. On the left it says, "We gather the feminine force of Ecuador to continue organizing." The images show a ceremonial circle constructed of native plants, grains, flower petals, fruits and corn. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONFENIAE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/826502101966663680?s=20.

Following the completion of many of these events, large numbers of photos were posted by participants who were on-the-ground, increasing the activity of the campaign by feeding back into the social media discussions. Good photos were frequently re-posted by others, often being shared between local organizations, so the same photo might be posted by CONAIE, CONFENIAE, and other local organizations interested in Indigenous rights, communication rights, or environmental issues. Figures 5.21 to 5.23 provide examples of these types of photos which circulate among individual supporters and organizations. The final example, Figure 5.23,

provides an example of the way that photos can transcend language barriers, as it was shared not only within Ecuador, but was also picked up by the Danish press and used in articles about the Indigenous protests. This image also highlights the way that photos can become emblematic of types of struggle without necessarily being direct representations of specific events. Figure 5.23 was posted following the same protest that Figure 5.22 is associated with, which seems to have been the protest advertised in Figure 5.17, however the photo was taken much earlier. An image search shows that the photo was present online at least as early as 2014, and was likely chosen by international media to represent the protest as it was readily available and demonstrated the conflict in a way that matched their representation of the event. In addition to being a high-quality photo, Figure 5.23 represents the broader idea of Ecuadorian Indigenous protest for an international audience, highlighting the relationship between protestors and police.

Figure 5.21. Photo of a march in support of Shuar in the small Amazonian city of Puyo, including many participants from CONFENIAE. This photo was used by both CONFENIAE and supporters who attended the march. Image posted by CONFENIAE, photo by anonymous CONFENIAE supporter; tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/811634719301500928?s=20.

Figure 5.22. Photo of an older woman with Shuar face markings protesting at a large march in Quito. Reposted repeatedly by supporters and other organizations. Image was first posted on Twitter associated with #SOSPuebloShuar by the Spanish journalist David Bou, who works for the journalism cooperative La Directa; tweet link: https://twitter.com/dvdbou/status/819172432787423235?s=20.

Figure 5.23. Photo of an Indigenous woman confronting police in riot gear during a large protest in Quito. This photo was used by both local organizations and the Danish press, being used as a face of the Indigenous resistance to mining and repression in Ecuador. The photo was first posted on Twitter during the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign by the Danish magazine Mondial News, though it was available online in 2014 through gettyimages.com as a stock photo. Original photographer unknown. Tweet link: https://twitter.com/mondiaalnieuws/status/819480794985074688?s=20.

Campaign Slogans and Logos

Images of campaign slogans and logos are visually dramatic, providing brief and punchy images that can help to grab the attention of potential supporters. Many of these images are converted from photos of Indigenous people, modified from the originals to be slightly abstract or black-and-white with only limited elements of color that highlight cultural elements, as seen in Figures 5.24 to 5.26. Many of these images were associated with the petitions and articles written by NGOs supporting the campaign, which resulted in them being some of the most frequently shared images. These associations with specific petitions also meant that they tended to be shared within specific subgroups. The first of these, Figure 5.24, for example, was connected

with the Amazon Watch petition in English, and was therefore shared often with English language posts.

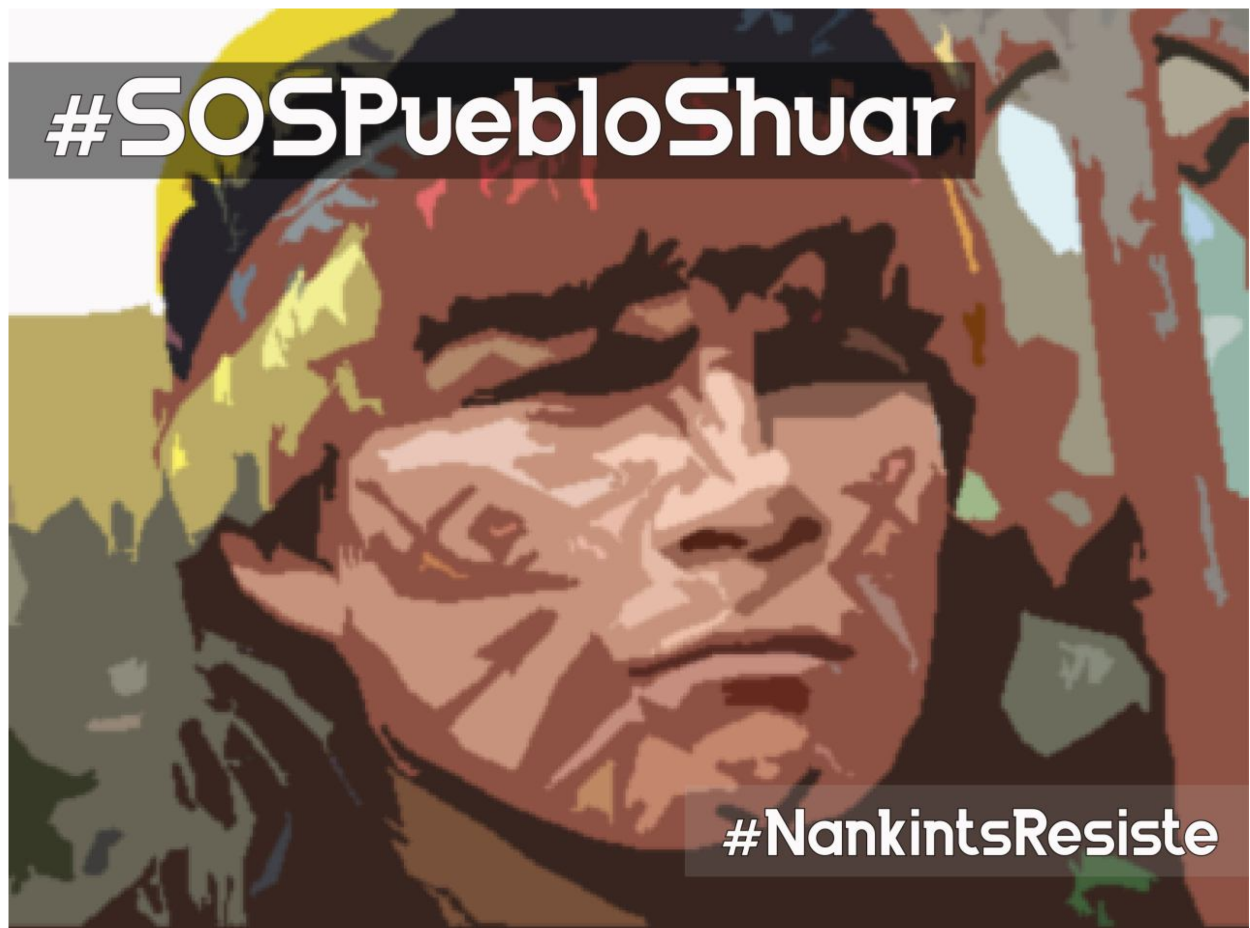

Figure 5.24. Abstract image of a Shuar warrior wearing a traditional feathered headdress and holding a spear, overlaid with the hashtags associated with the campaign - #SOSPuebloShuar and #NankintsResiste. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/809858422913007616?s=20.

Figure 5.25. Black and white photo of a Shuar woman with colored elements showing traditional waist cords, earrings and necklace, and bowls of the fermented beverage chicha. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/809886963494961153?s=20.

Figure 5.26. Black and white photo of a Shuar man wearing a traditional feathered headdress shown in color. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/809862031767650305?s=20.

Some of the images in this style demonstrated more visual complexity, including additional text or more complicated images, such as those shown in Figures 5.27 to 5.29. These images provide longer slogans and slightly more complex images. Regardless of complexity of the campaign posters and emblems, these images were some of the most frequently shared, being a simple visual that immediately links to the campaign and that can offer visual continuity that helps

supporters identify associated posts. All of these images focus on traditional cultural elements[106]. This use of imagery of traditional Indigenous culture is a tool that is consciously utilized by CONAIE and CONFENIAE to emphasize the traditional claim on the land by Indigenous nations. Various organizational members expressed similar ideas about traditional culture reflecting responsible use of lands, for example in the workshops which will be described in Chapter 7. These expressions of traditional culture may help to solidify demands for consultation on land use, the right to which is present in the Ecuadorian constitution for Indigenous peoples' traditional territories.[107] Some of these uses of traditional culture are potentially problematic, and may demonstrate the expected audience of the posts. Romanticizing, as discussed in Chapter 3, is a common tool in the development of support networks between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. While it can create issues through the further entrenchment of stereotypes, it can also be used to strategically manipulate stereotypes to draw useful attention to a campaign. Without knowing more about the background of these images and their reception it is impossible to know the outcome of romanticized images in this case.

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[106] The choice to emphasize Indigenous cultural elements when attempting to draw non-Indigenous support has already been discussed at length in Chapters 3 and 4.

[107] It is important to note that these rights, though delineated, are not necessarily upheld. The right to prior consultation was discussed in Chapter 2, and can be found in the Ecuadorian constitution here: https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/documentos/constitucion_de_bolsillo.pdf

Figure 5.27. Poster showing a black-and-white image of a Shuar warrior holing a wooden spear and wearing a feathered headdress. Text reads: “Shuar people resist in the face of criminal miners” First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by use Ant0Calle, feminist anti-mining activist and supporter of YASUnidos; tweet link: https://twitter.com/Ant0Calle/status/809837202435932160?s=20.

Figure 5.28. Poster showing a black-and-white stylized image of a Shuar leader with a colored headdress, holding a spear with a tsantsa on the top.[108] This is the most potentially controversial of the poster images, highlighting a controversial aspect of Shuar culture, and the one that most strongly romanticizes Shuar culture. By emphasizing a cultural practice that is viewed negatively by the wider public in Ecuador (and which was made illegal by the Ecuadorian state), as well as positioning the culture as disappearing, this poster strips the Shuar of their agency as a

[108] Tsantsa is the Shuar name for a shrunken head, the creation of which was a cultural practice of the Jivaroan peoples (a group of peoples including the Shuar). To explain at their most basic level, Tsantsas are sacred objects created from the skulls of enemies following battle and are displayed to frighten enemies. The creation of Tsantsas is no longer common, and possibly not practiced at all, as Shuar have become more deeply incorporated into the colonial western state. To read more about this controversial and complex topic, please see Rubenstein 2007.

modern cultural group. The text reads, “Mining Would Exterminate Me.” First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user HaranValer, human rights activist and supporter of Ecuadorian Indigenous rights organizations based in Texas; tweet link: https://twitter.com/HaranValer/status/810474002959437824?s=20.

Figure 5.29. Stylized image shows a Shuar warrior with wooden spear, feather headdress and body paint in front of a mine in the Amazon. Text reads “This is 2017 what do you want for your children?” First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONFENIAE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/confeniae1/status/814527034865188864?s=20.

Figure 5.30. Photo of a stage being prepared for the Ecuadorian New Year's Eve tradition of burning the Old Man. Photo by author.

It was New Year's Eve and the last day of my husband's visit. So much of the visit had gone poorly, including catching some kind of stomach bug over Christmas that had us alternating trips to the pharmacy and the grocery store as we tried to take care of one another. We were finally well enough to spend an entire day out exploring the city, and we were quickly amazed by the transformation that had taken place in the time we had been ill. Stages had been erected all across the downtown, each one covered with mannequins depicting public figures in preparation of their burning at midnight. Nearly all the stages had comic themes, and while some were advertisements for businesses, most had political themes that criticized one public figure or another. Now I dawdle, reading every sign and trying to understand the comedy of each as the sun burns down on our heads. I am confused by the tradition, and will spend ages online before bed reading about the Burning of the Old Man that I will also see played out as part of the

#SOSPuebloShuar after my husband returns home. Eventually my husband pulls me away to find shade and a cold drink before we are overwhelmed in the heat.

Cartoons and Memes

This is one of the most compelling of the image categories, often reshared among the organizations and supporters. These are the images that best exemplify the routine resistance that was discussed above, but that can come from a range of different sources. Sometimes these images are taken from mass media, such as newspapers and magazines, before being spread over social media. Other examples are created specifically for distribution on the Internet.

Some of these images come from major cartoonists, such as Figures 5.31 to 5.38. The first of the artists, Pancho Cajas, publishes in the popular Ecuadorian newspaper El Comercio. The second artist, Xavier Bonilla, works for another major Ecuadorian newspaper, El Universo, under the name Bonil. Major newspapers play an important role as mass media creators of this type of satirical social commentary, with a long history of providing an outlet for cartoons and editorials critical of existing power structures. Bonil presents an interesting example of how this status can be challenged, however, as his cartoons critical of the President Correa's government resulted in him facing a number of lawsuits[109].

[109] You can read more about the Bonil here: https://www.cartooningforpeace.org/en/dessinateurs/bonil/

Figure 5.31. Cartoon by Pancha Cajas showing a military police officer dragging a protestor by the foot. Text on the book he is reading says, " Manual to control marches," while the text on this riot shield reads, "I am Military and Police also." Image originally published in El Comercio, link to original unavailable, but first Twitter post of image from El Comercio on August 21, 2015 available here: https://twitter.com/elcomerciocom/status/634734264790085633?s=20. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user RobLibre; tweet link: https://twitter.com/RobLibre/status/809861753949581312?s=20.

Figure 5.32. Cartoon by Bonil showing President Correa dressed in a feathered headdress and followed by a huge figure labeled “Mines” being carried on a palanquin as they approach an Indigenous community. Correa says, “You people are dressed up as ancestors/and more ancient are the Chinese emperors!” The original publication of this cartoon cannot be found. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user NelsonErazoEC, retweeting a post by user Marietareina; tweet link: https://twitter.com/NelsonErazoEC/status/810956797699821569?s=20.

The artist responsible for Figures 5.33 and 5.34 is Antonio Velasco, who is known as Toño, He does not work directly for a specific newspaper, but his cartoons are widely available on social media and across the Internet. His work focuses on the dual issues of the militarization of the region along with the precedence given to the rights of the Chinese company.

Figure 5.33. Cartoon by Toño shows a military policeman confronting an Indigenous man and saying, “We are killing each other among Ecuadorians to benefits third parties.” In the background a figure intended to represent the Chinese agreeing. Original publication of the cartoon cannot be found. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE; tweet link: https://twitter.com/CONAIE_Ecuador/status/809865569054945284?s=20.

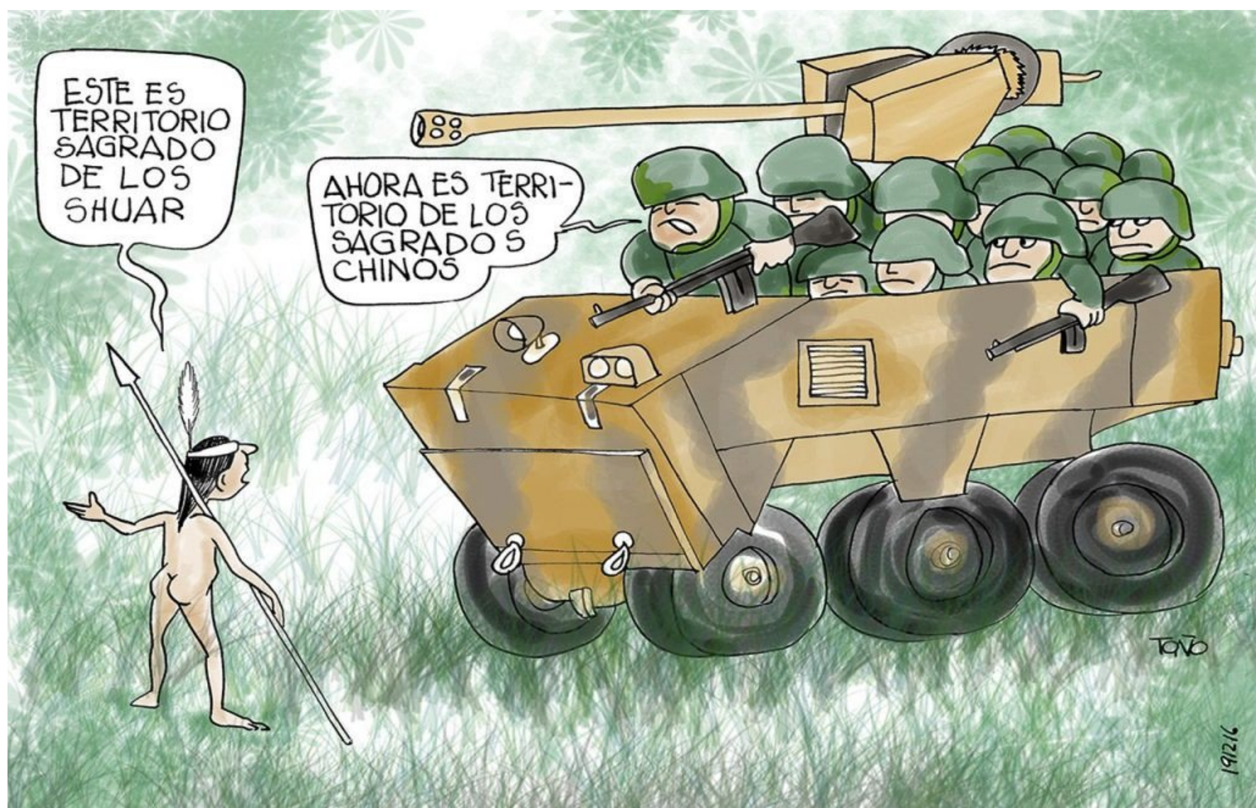

Figure 5.34. Cartoon by Toño showing an Indigenous man confronting a tank full of soldiers. The Indigenous man says, "This is sacred territory of the Shuar," and a soldier responds, "Right now it's territory of the sacred Chinese." First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by the social issues blog Semana 56; tweet link: https://twitter.com/Semana_56/status/811886730613850112?s=20.

Vilma Vargas is another cartoonist who has been featured in a number of newspapers and magazines, and who has suffered censorship from the Ecuadorian government as well. Figures 5.35 to 5.38 show some of the work that she posted during the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, focusing on the involvement of the Chinese in the region, the continuation of the repression of Indigenous peoples, and criticism of the Ecuadorian government.

Figure 5.35. Cartoon by Vilma Vargas shows a stunned looking family in front of elevated houses which are stranded on the star of the Chinese flag. Original publication of image unavailable. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by CONAIE supporter Diana_Amores; tweet link: https://twitter.com/Diana_Amores/status/809838976639102976?s=20.

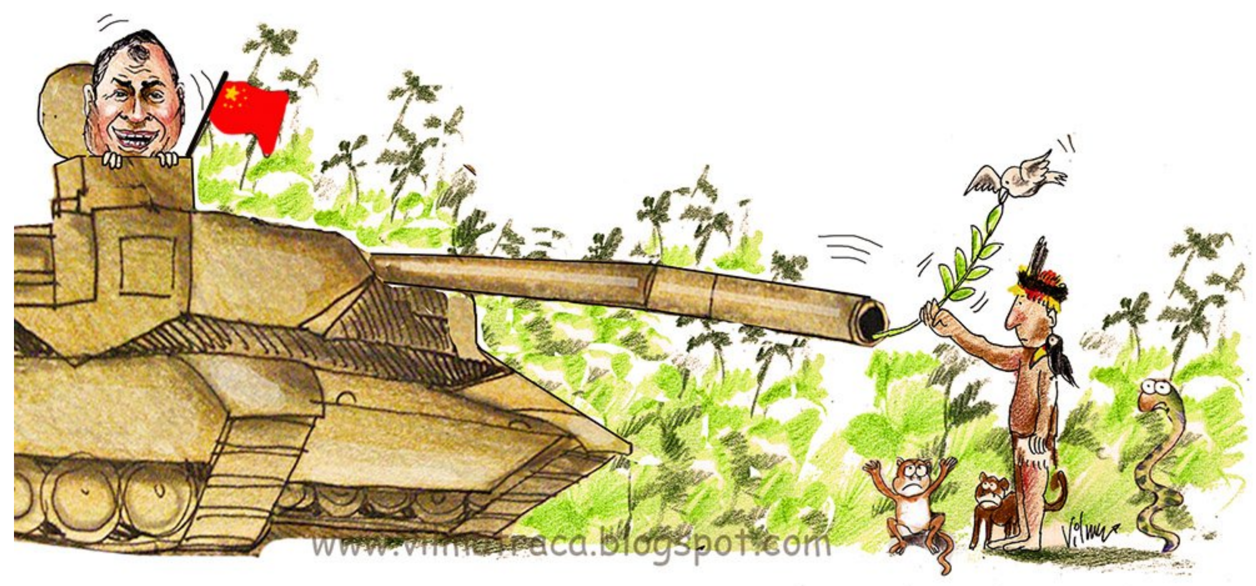

Figure 5.36. Cartoon by Vilma Vargas shows an indigenous man and a dove putting a frond of greenery into the barrel of a tank, while Correa’s head pops out of the top of the tank with a Chinese flag. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by the artist Vilma Vargas; tweet link: https://twitter.com/vilmavargasva/status/810472653572161536?s=20.

Figure 5.37. Cartoon by Vilma Vargas with two panels. Top panel, labeled “500 Years Ago,” shows a horseback conquistador attacking Indigenous people with a spear while saying “We are going to conquer.” Bottom panel,

labeled “Now,” shows a horseback policeman attacking indigenous people with a baton and carrying a riot shield while saying “We are going to have a dialogue” while Correa looks on mounted on a small donkey. Image has been user since at least 2015, with an instance available through the organization Intercontinental Cry, link: https://intercontinentalcry.org/ecuador-indigenous-uprising/ First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user LoboStepario; tweet link: https://twitter.com/LoboStepario/status/811275417562841088?s=20.

Figure 5.38. Cartoon by Vilma Vargas showing a comparison of a Shuar man, wearing a feathered headdress and facepaint, holding a piece of foliage, with President Correa wearing facepaint in the form of $ and holding an axe and bone. Original publication location unavailable. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by feminist human rights activist pametroya; tweet link: https://twitter.com/pametroya/status/809842358858711040?s=20.

The purpose of political cartoons are focused around an ethical core and have long been used to bring light to injustice through satire (Julin 2018). These cartoons are typically critical of political and other powerful structures, and bring to light social and political issues that may not be widely understood by the public (Julin 2018; Corstange 2007). While all of these cartoons proved popular online, often getting reshared more frequently than other images, they all have

problematic representations of Indigenous peoples. Obviously they also include some problematic representations of Chinese people as well, stereotypical representations which may have an impact on Chinese people living within Ecuador as well. This representation of Chinese people is perhaps understandable, as Chinese corporations represent a portion of the side of this conflict that is seen as holding power. The representation of Indigenous peoples is a different issue as they are the recipients of abuses in this case, and under a typical reading of political cartoons would not be the target of the satire. These forms of humor can be both influential, providing satire that draws the interest of a wider audience than many other types of images, but they may also be creating problems. The popularity of these cartoonists results in their representations receiving additional attention online and possibly further entrenching stereotypical views of Indigenous people within Ecuador. The focus of political cartoons is understood to be countering strong political figures, and these political cartoons are indeed oriented towards a criticism of the government for their alignment with foreign companies. The stereotyping of Indigenous peoples in these images seems to be incidental to the point of the cartoons, and potentially counterproductive.

Memes offer a more popular form of satirical commentary, often incorporating similar themes. The memes that were popular during the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign are no exception to this general trend. Much like the commentary offered during the New Year's celebrations shown in Figure 5.30, they express criticism of the either the government in general or specifically of members of the government. During his presidency, Correa was a popular target for satirical criticism in memes, as can be seen in Figures 5.39 through 5.41.

Figure 5.39. Meme showing a photo of Indigenous women and children in front of a waterfall, in front is a photo of President Correa wearing a feathered headdress. Text at top reads, “To use your own words.” Correa’s speech bubble then says, “We cannot allow criminals dressed up as ancestors invade Chinese territory.” The bottom states, “What a double standard!” Creator of meme cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user lenhurtado; tweet link: https://twitter.com/lenhurtado/status/809888749849079809?s=20.

Figure 5.40. Image shows a photo of then President Correa shaking hands with President-Elect Lenín overlaid with the text: “State of Exception Decreed in Morona: We cannot allow those Shuars to invade Chinese territory.” Creator of meme cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user AndresStalinC; tweet link: https://twitter.com/AndresStalinC/status/810102661601263616?s=20.

Figure 5.41. Meme shows two panels. On top is a photo of President Correa surrounded by traditionally dressed Indigenous people while he wears a feathered headdress, labeled "On Campaign." On the bottom is a photo of military police lilned up along the highway in the Amazon with the label "In Power." Creator of meme cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user ManuelaCanizare; tweet link: https://twitter.com/ManuelaCanizare/status/810261266946228224?s=20.

The first two of these memes, Figures 5.39 and 5.40, use Correa's own words against him from an illadvised statement about the conflict over mining rights. The first and third memes provide some insight into the changes in Correa's behavior towards Indigenous peoples, using images of

him dressed in a feathered headdress from the beginning of his election campaign when he was expressing support for Indigenous rights, as discussed in Chapter 2. While many of the cartoons also made reference to Correa's words and wearing of Indigenous clothing, they presented a much more problematic depiction of Indigenous peoples, diminishing their potential to productively counter the racism inherent in many of Correa's actions and statements. Much like political cartoons, memes typically offer social commentary and criticism, though they have much less controlled social expectations about who they will criticize and what form that criticism will take. The problematic nature of this humor stems from its nature as destructive satire, which "is directed at a specific group and does not include those who mock" and which "reinforc[es] grotesque cultural stereotypes" (Julin 2018, 159). These examples of satire are not critical of the stereotypes they employ and may be contributing to the wider assumptions of Indigenous peoples.

Though he was the most popular and prevalent, Correa was not the only official figure targeted in memes. Military figures were also shown in a negative light. Figure 5.42, below, shows an example of a military leader receiving similar attention for his role. These depictions were much less common though, and the military in general was much more likely to receive the attention of meme creators. Figure 5.43 is one of the earliest examples of this focus on military operations, referencing the military's presence in the region during the Christmas season. This was one of the earliest memes associated with the campaign, and spread quickly and widely.

Figure 5.42. Meme uses a color altered photo of General Roque Moreira on the street of an Amazonian city. Woven hats such as those associated with Chinese farmers have been placed over the heads of the General and his subordinates, and a red star placed over the General's heart. Text above the photo reads, "General Roque Moreira, Chief Operative in charge of defending Chinese sovereignty in Shuar territory." Meme creator cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by user shababaty; tweet link: https://twitter.com/shababaty/status/810930071695458308?s=20.

Figure 5.43. Meme is composed of an image of military vehicles entering the Amazon, overlaid with the text, "You cannot say Merry Christmas when the Shuar people are being attacked by the government." Meme creator cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by the rights organization Resistir Derecho; tweet link: https://twitter.com/ResistirDerecho/status/812327582058344448?s=20.

The final set of memes that I will discuss offers criticism of a national campaign to encourage Ecuadorians to buy products from within the country first. The "Ecuador First" campaign was often juxtaposed with the government's support of Chinese claims in the Amazon.

Figure 5.44. Logo of the “Primero Ecuador” campaign has been modified. Text reads, “Consume national products – China First.” Meme creator cannot be identified. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by AndresStalinC; tweet link: https://twitter.com/AndresStalinC/status/810102275783987200?s=20.

Figure 5.45. Photo of the military lined up along a highway in the Amazon with a billboard of the Ecuador First campaign in the background. Text reads, "The ambiguity that the military sent by Correa are in front of a billboard that says 'Ecuador First' but to defend a Chinese mine and attack the Shuar community." Meme created by ManuelaCanizare. First instance of image found associated with #SOSPuebloShuar on Twitter posted by meme creator ManuealCanizare; tweet link: https://twitter.com/ManuelaCanizare/status/810261266946228224?s=20.

All of these examples of cartoons and memes use the juxtaposition of disparate elements to create comic and satirical commentary on the government's actions in the region. Some are more effective than others, and those that proved the most popular were often those that best highlighted the absurdity of the situation. For example, Figure 5.39 was the meme that received by far the most attention, as it was posted on the first day of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign and continued to be reposted at various points throughout the campaign. The meme also seems to highlight the additional purposes that memes can have, as the original post of this meme linked it

to accounts associated with the Unidad Popular, another political party in Ecuador. The intentions of supporters such as these may be multiple, providing additional visibility for a campaign that aligns with the party's beliefs while also discrediting a political rival.

Discussion and Conclusions

Images provide a form of communication that extends beyond simple text descriptions and that can be shared to increase the engagement of online supporters. It is helpful to remember the data from Chapter 4, which demonstrated that visual attachments increased the engagement of people on Twitter, particularly among English Twitter users. Each of these types of images serves the purpose of increasing involvement with the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign in a particular way. First, the evidence photos provide supporters with a more direct and personal window into the situation in the Amazon. These photos show situations that are not publicized in mass media. The posters are aimed at an audience largely within Ecuador, increasing participation in specific events and activities. This encourages active support through participation in events. The campaign slogans and logos provide images that can connect with a wide range of supporters, including those from an international audience. The high-contrast, often simplistic images of Indigenous peoples in traditional clothing may present strategic uses of stereotypes to increase support for Indigenous rights to traditional territories. The final category of images, the cartoons and memes, present the most interesting case for this research. The use of humor provides a subversive force to counteract hegemonic power structures. The cartoons created by non-Indigenous artists, however, while presenting views critical of government activities in the Amazon also perpetuate stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. It is popular memes created by social media users that offer everyday resistance through satirical commentary without problematic representation. This is a valuable form of visual for social media campaigns; while all of the types of visuals provide a specific value, it is memes that create engagement in the campaign through viral spread. Virality seems to be the essential element in the creation of highly developed online networks, which the organizations seek to bring visibility to their campaigns and allow for greater self-representation.

The remaining chapters discuss data that was collected during the two periods of fieldwork in Ecuador, focusing on the events and interactions that are the other end of the communication

spectrum. Within Ecuador, participation in events on-the-ground concretely demonstrates the stated opinions of supporters and establishes or builds relationships. Chapter 6 will focus on these relationships and an event that CONAIE and CONFENIAE have jointly created with supporting organizations.

Chapter 6: Communication in Action, Networking and the *Encuentros Nacionales de la Comunicación Comunitaria*[110]

Figure 6.1. Photo of people's feet, as they stand in a spiral for an elder to offer a blessing before the beginning of the *Encuentro Nacional de la Comunicación Comunitaria* in Quito. Photo by author.

I walked awkwardly into the courtyard outside of the university, hoping that I had found the right department. I had been in Ecuador for a very short time, and I was still feeling a little bit unsure of my relationship with CONAIE. I had been invited to attend by Apawki Castro, the Communications Director of CONAIE, so I knew that this was going to be a good use of my time. Since almost all of the seats in the courtyard were taken, with extra people clustered around the edges, I thought I must be on the right track. Gradually I appreciated that they were all gathered to avoid stepping on something, and as I worked my way into the crowd, I realized that the

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[110] National Meetings of Community Communication

center of the space was taken up by a huge spiral, created with flowers, grains, and fruits and vegetables. In the middle of the spiral a woman with hair greying at the temples was building a small fire. The group was eclectic; a mixture of academics, Indigenous leaders and youth, and community organizers. We all gathered around the outer edges of the spiral as the elder began to speak, switching back and forth from Kichwa to Spanish, welcoming everyone and beginning a prayer for the success of the upcoming conference. As she spoke a young man came around with a bowl of seeds and grain, and I followed the lead of the man next to me, taking a small handful. At some unspoken sign, as the elder neared the end of her welcoming prayer, we all began walking through the spiral, forming a line that wound through the curves of the spiral to the fire in the center and casting our handfuls of grain into the flames. After the last of us had dropped our handfuls and the final words were spoken we smiled at one another, beginning to drift away as a group of Indigenous youth waited patiently for the elder to finish her personal prayers before gathering up the materials of the spiral[111].

The above vignette describes the opening ceremony of what became the first in a series of events that I participated in during my two fieldwork trips focusing on communication practices. Beginning about a month after my arrival in Quito, this *Encuentro Nacional* was my first demonstration of the relationship between the representation that I saw online, which had drawn me to study CONAIE in the first place, and the daily work of producing and developing those communication practices. The remaining chapters of this thesis focus on ways in which communication practices are woven into the strategic planning and implementation of CONAIE and CONFENIAE's broader goals and overarching principles, and how these are reflected in the constantly evolving networks that are the essential form for the organizations' effective functioning.

This chapter begins with an overview of the ways in which representational choices flow between network forms of media and linked organizations, and the defined wholes of events, giving brief illustrations of how this relationship functions. Next, the chapter presents examples

[111] The spiral reflects many of the concepts inherent to *sumac kawsay* as outlined in Chapter 2, for example the interconnection of humans with the environment and all living things. Additionally, it emphasizes a holistic and nonlinear sense of time (Coral-Guerrero, García-Quero and Guardiola 2021). During the ceremony the spiral created a strong sense of shared experience with the other participants, offering a collaborative beginning to the conference.

of the ways in which networks influence representational opportunities, both through active participation and shared knowledge bases. As effective rights campaigns often rely on changing the perceptions of a wider public, making connections with other groups can be essential to success (Beamish and Luebbers 2009). Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of an annual communication focused event, the *Encuentros Nacionales de la Comunicación Comunitaria*, organized by CONAIE and CONFENIAE in collaboration with a number of their existing supporters.

The Continuum of Participation

This dissertation contributes to a large and growing body of work considering the relationship between online behaviours and the face-to-face experiences of individuals. As emerged in the *Why We Post* study started by Daniel Miller, the actions that individuals take on social media are not separate from their lives, but rather form an integral part of their identities and behaviours (Miller et al. 2016, 100).[112] Activities on social media are directly entwined with other activities in life, rather than being isolated or unrelated. The same stands true for organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE, which intertwine their online communication with their other activities.[113] Chapters 4 and 5 focused on examples of social media use as part of a rights-based campaign, providing insight into the power of linked hashtags and visuals to draw additional support for the needs of Indigenous organizations. This social media use does not exist in isolation, however, but reflects a wider use of communication practices that is deeply tied to broader goals and activities. The focused use of communication methods has always played an integral part in successful campaigns, with the development of slogans and targeted visuals acting to unify participants the same way they do now, and in the same way that hashtags currently function in online campaigns.

[112] This has long been a concern of studies that seek to separate the online and offline practices, see Postill 2008 and Hine 2000 for two discussions from different points in the consideration of this issue.

[113] I speak here of the organizations as entities rather than the individuals members. Since the organizations are representative of a communal practice and approach to life, as described through principles like *sumac kawsay* and *ayllu* discussed in Chapter 2, discussing individual intentions is not appropriate. The individuals who take on leadership roles in the organizations change periodically, and while they may be more or less efficient in those roles or have to respond to different situations, their overarching intentions remain fairly constant.

CONAIE and CONFENIAE both recognize the importance of online communication practices to the success of their organizations; valuing the links that it provides between organization members, the connections that it can provide to support networks outside of their organizations, and the emphasis that it can place on real-time situations. Communication does not occur in a void or with separate intentions from the other activities of the organizations, so it is essential to recognize how the flow of dialogue through different media influences events. The actions and events of the organizations are reflected in their online practices and representations. Each branch of actions supports the other actions and activities of the organizations, so an online campaign is directly in support of and supported by the meetings and protests that the online campaign helped to coordinate and advertise, which are shared and discussed through social media both in real-time and after the fact. The examples that have been considered up to this point help to highlight this relationship, especially evident in the campaign design elements discussed in Chapter 4. The campaign played out largely through social media, with a significantly wider audience than the local Shuar communities experiencing the threats, with the dialogue and interactions directly reflected in the decisions of how and when Indigenous leaders and community members would apply pressure to the government.[114]

The same pattern of media usage does not end with specific campaigns, however, and can be seen in both the daily lives of members,[115] in the use of online activities as a way to share evidence of abuses of power occurring in communities,[116] and in the way these two are sometimes related. The impacts of violence from government agents or extractivism on the daily lives of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, for example, are often represented in their personal social media accounts, which are then heavily linked through hashtags and networks to the social media representation of the organizations themselves. The process of sharing these abuses and seeking change links individuals to their personal networks, and gradually to wider support

[114] As in other parts of the world, the financial stakes of these conflicts have a major impact on the effectiveness of the protest (for example, Thom 2019). With the high stakes of the mining concessions, the likelihood of an easy resolution is small, and any progress will likely rely on international pressure which is not guaranteed. Territorial claims related to already protected areas are much easier to negotiate as they do not have the same financial dynamic.

[115] Also seen in examples of memes from Chapter 5, where humour and visual communication are used to share criticism in an approachable way.

[116] This use of online evidence display can also be seen in the recent Black Lives Matter protests (Casas and Williams 2019).

networks that can react through wider campaigns and events. One of the most vital ways that these connections are being used through online communication, then, is in building and maintaining support networks with other individuals and organizations.

Constructing Support Networks and Diverse Alliances

Scholars have used a range of different frameworks in thinking about the way that diverse groups can productively align for support in achieving shared goals. These frameworks are valuable when considering the construction of networks, and the ways that tensions do not necessarily overwhelm productive relationships. I find two of these frameworks particularly productive, Nancy Fraser's idea of subaltern counter-publics (1990), and the idea of cultural citizenship (Yúdice 2003; García Canclini 2018).

Fraser's use of counterpublics highlights the cohesion of smaller segments of society with shared experiences and identities (1990). The use of networks by Indigenous organizations goes beyond this conception, however, developing multiple overlapping and interconnected networks. Thus, many of the networks that CONAIE and CONFENIAE participate in have moved beyond a single counterpublic to connect with other groups for action on specific issues. Often these organizations will work with one group on a single shared interest to achieve a limited goal, while working with completely different groups for other goals. These complexities highlight the dual nature of counterpublics that Fraser identified, where "on the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" (1990, 68).[117] This contrasts somewhat with the concept of cultural citizenship, which has been used by Latin American scholars of media and citizenship to explain the relationships that develop between diverse sectors of society when they work together for common goals, particularly in rights-based campaigns. Cultural citizenship emphasizes the importance of tolerance of different cultures within a nation and the need to accept diverse groups to create a unified whole, as well as reflecting the difficulty governments face in uniting such diverse citizens. This inability to create unity has driven people to participate in citizenship through smaller groups, such as local

[117] These ideas will be further developed in Chapter 8.

organizations seeking specific rights (García Canclini 2018). These small groups often have a specific shared goal or interest, such as improved access to housing.

There is a balance that must be struck in seeking unity, for while a shared identity creates a sense of cohesion within an organization, for support networks to function no single identity can dominate too strongly. Within the context of Indigenous rights campaigns, the shared understandings of cultural citizenship allow networks to "mediate among diverse sectors of civil society so they can meet and work together" (Yúdice 2003, 147). CONAIE and CONFENIAE have already spent their decades of history finding this balance to some extent. While all of their members are Indigenous, they represent Indigenous nationalities from across a wide region with distinct traditions, histories, needs and demands. The addition of distinct national identities, as are present in the Indigenous organizations that are the focus of this thesis, adds another layer of complexity to the idea of cultural citizenship. For these organizations, shared goals cannot overstep the autonomy of the separate Indigenous nationalities. Balancing this diversity is an essential goal for the creation of a functioning support network.

The challenge of moving beyond the representation of a single identity-group to shared advocacy lies in the incorporation of distinct perspectives and needs within a collective that can still attain a common goal. Ecuador has extended this perspective to the national level. Cultural citizenship's idea of unity in the face of difference is reflected in the concept of *plurinacionalidad* emphasized by the Ecuadorian government. *Plurinacionalidad*'s focus on the respect for distinct identities and ideas of nationality speaks to the same ideal of tolerance. Reactionary politicians who reject the usefulness of cultural citizenship claim that it "signifies a loss of national and spiritual unity, as sectarianism and secularism overwhelm patriotism and superstition" (Miller 2007, 179). These ideals of unity are also not easily implemented, as evidenced by the continuing conflicts between the Ecuadorian government and Indigenous peoples. *Plurnationalidad* is thus often seen as a token gesture for not being implemented in a meaningful way.

One of the key factors at work in these disputes is the inherently problematic nature of the capitalist economy, as the advantages of activities such as resource exploitation and wage labour

tend to unequally benefit different groups in society, with minorities and those already in poverty gaining the least. Subaltern counterpublics CONAIE and CONFENIAE have already seen these imbalances in their interactions with the Ecuadorian government and multinational corporations when resource extraction projects have been carried out on Indigenous lands. Cultural citizenship, as envisioned by media and citizenship scholars, seeks to ameliorate this imbalance when implemented by rights activists through the "integration of those sectors of society segregated from each other" (Yudice 2003, 141). An example of just such an integration can be seen in the October 2019 citizen strike in Ecuador, which organized massive actions in response to a new austerity bill that the government was implementing. CONAIE was a key player in that strike, which brought together Indigenous peoples with unions, students, smaller social organizations, and even middle-class neighborhoods rose up to the eventual repeal of Decree 883 (Ponce et al. 2020). This is a resurgence of the role that CONAIE frequently filled in throughout the 1990s, acting as an organizer to coordinate movements that received broad support.

Figure 6.2. Preparation for a march in Quito, with banners being raised in a plaza. Photo by author.

I walk through the center of Quito during my second trip to Ecuador. As I enter the Plaza Simón Bolivar in the Parque La Alameda I am struck by an almost visceral sense of déja vu as colorful banners swirl around me and the chatter of protesters assembling to one side grows louder. This protest is like others I have seen throughout my time working in Ecuador, reflecting the engagement of the population with a variety of issues and their willingness to show up on-the-ground to attempt to change them. The banners of this particular protest show that the current movement is working to counter Chinese mining in the Amazon. Some of the banners show emblems of the collective Bloque Proletario, an umbrella organization that supports groups of workers, farmers, students, and youth. Participants are wearing shirts of other organizations' emblems, representing student and community communications groups, all mixing and separating as the groups get into a formation to begin walking down the hill into the center of the Old Town. In the middle of the march a large group of drummers begin to set a rhythm,

moving into the street surrounded by the banners. As they block traffic I follow alongside, trying to understand the words of the chants that the marchers are shouting. People stop as they pass, attracted by the noise and bright colors. This march, like so many others, ends outside of the Presidential Palace, where I mill with the participants before finally wandering off as they disperse.

Indigenous Organizations and the Importance of Support Networks

The use of support networks offers opportunities for Indigenous peoples to expand their resources and draw in support outside of their immediate surroundings. For isolated communities external support may mean the difference between success or failure in land rights claims, demands for resources such as clean water, or funding for basic services like education. Networks have always played a vital role when developing communication strategies, as they may provide avenues to broaden support bases or gain vital communications skills.[118] Some of these collaborations develop due to the intersectionality inherent in rights claims, linking the connected or overlapping demands of other groups to those of Indigenous peoples.[119] Indigenous peoples may see resistance to their claims within their own country or region due to racism and bias,[120] meaning that the creation of support networks may help to broaden their support. Environmental movements are frequent supporters of Indigenous movements, aligning an interest in protecting natural resources and preventing extractive industries with the right's based territorial claims of Indigenous peoples.

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[118] The importance of support networks for communication did not begin with the use of the Internet. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Zapatistas are a classic example of the use of networks for communication, often sending news and announcements through word of mouth to allies in other countries to be spread to wider networks of supporters (Cleaver 1998b). Similarly, when discussing the development of skills, Terence Turner worked with the Kayapo to provide them with training in the use of video recording equipment, which could be used in documenting confrontations with Brazilian government officials and raise interest in the international media through the very act of using video (Turner 1992).

[119] Feminist or women's rights advocates are a good example of intersectionality, often working with women in Indigenous rights movements, as has been discussed in relation to Zapatista women (Belausteguigoitia 2006). Other examples include the support offered by the black freedom struggle to the United Farm Workers during the 1960's, which created an alliance based on experiences of racial discrimination (Araiza 2013) and the many partnerships between rural white settlers and Native Americans to prevent outside incursions for development or extraction since the mid-1900's (Grossman 2017).

[120] This racism is firmly based in Ecuador's colonial history and is directly reinforced by the government's actions (Martínez Novo 2018).

The connection between environmental interests and Indigenous land rights has seen some high-profile visibility in the past. Often the connection between an Indigenous campaign and a celebrity is all that is required to raise an issue to international awareness. Sting, for example, set up the Rainforest Foundation and has been heavily involved in environmental campaigns in the Amazon, including the Kayapo resistance to the Belo Monte dam (Zanotti 2015; Sting and Dutilleux 1989). Much like the support of Jared Leto for the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign, the participation of celebrities can raise the profile of campaigns. Conservation is a popular focus for celebrities, but the relationships between celebrities and Indigenous peoples offer both the positive benefit of higher profile media coverage and the danger of having their interests sidelined for a broader environmental objective (Brockington 2008). The value of these relationships must also be balanced with considerations of "adaptive resistance," which sometimes require organizations and communities to alter their activities and public presentation (Arévalo and Ros-tonen 2009). With the need to modify these representational choices, networks may not always be beneficial or may have limited benefit. This is a "double bind of representation," but there are contexts where the benefits of using a support network outweigh the drawbacks of adapting to the role an NGO wants an organization to play (Yúdice 2003, 155).

Development of Networks by CONAIE and CONFENIAE

One of the ways in which CONAIE and CONFENIAE both leverage their communication potential is to build and support networks around the world. Some of these collaborations are with other Indigenous organizations, such as those that exist between CONAIE and the smaller Indigenous organizations throughout Ecuador. These networks offer opportunities for organizations and communities to provide mutual support to one another and more widely share news to increase awareness of situations faced by these communities.[121]

Support networks with non-Indigenous organizations and groups are also extremely common for CONAIE and CONFENIAE, and have proven essential for successfully raising enough

[121] There are many examples of this type of supportive communication. Standing Rock is one of the most prominent recent examples, during which Indigenous peoples around the world shared posts about abuses, as was discussed in Chapter 4. Some groups are more successful than others at obtaining this support, which requires ready access to communication technologies that are not available in every community, particularly those that are the most remote and therefore are more likely to be in conflicts that are not known to a wider public.

awareness to challenge abuses and focusing media representation to shape the narrative that is most beneficial to the communities. Academic networks provide access to socially powerful voices of scholars and students supportive of Indigenous goals and capable of amplifying their messages. Academic partnerships have also proven helpful to CONAIE and CONFENIAE, offering access to expertise and training that would not otherwise be possible.[122] One public university in particular, the Universidad Central de Ecuador, has been especially close to the organizations. This is one of the highest ranked public universities in Ecuador, and is one of the organizers of the *Encuentros Nacionales* discussed below. Within Ecuador the third notable type of network connection that Indigenous organizations develop is with organizations focusing on specific, non-Indigenous, causes. These partnerships typically demonstrate a strong alignment of interests between the organizations, often sharing a focus on social topics, such as education or healthcare.

International networks also develop, and they tend to fall along these same three divisions: other Indigenous organizations around the world,[123] academic connections,[124] or links to international civil society organizations. Many of the external organizations are also focused on environmental concerns, and demonstrate an overlap of interest with Indigenous organizations during land rights campaigns.

Online Development of Networks

One of the clearest impacts of online communication for Indigenous organizations is in the development of support networks, drawing increasing amounts of assistance to Indigenous causes, through increased visibility in social and mass media, additional backing if abuses are

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[122] Ecuador's university system can be challenging to navigate, with extreme divisions between public and private universities stemming largely from differences in financial capacities. Public universities are highly impacted by the ever changing political and economic situation in Ecuador, with reduced government funding impacting their ability to function effectively (for a brief discussion of the educational challenges in Ecuadorian higher education in English, visit: https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/403/Ecuador-HIGHER-EDUCATION.html; Ecuadorian university ranking can be found here: https://www.4icu.org/ec/).

[123] CONAIE has long developed relationships with Indigenous organizations in other countries. Many of these relationships have developed thanks to media use, with groups raising awareness of their own campaigns online. In this way social media such as Facebook and Twitter have been particularly helpful to Indigenous organizations.

[124] Often these relationships begin the way my own relationship with CONAIE and CONFENIAE began, through research focused on the organizations, which then may lead to other opportunities to offer additional resources and support.

raised in international forums like the UN, and even financial or material donations.[125] As discussed, communication is historically or traditionally conceptualized as one-way behaviour – sending out information without control over the results. The changes with the development of ICTs and social media are evident, providing a platform more readily adapted for dialogue and exchange than has ever been possible through media in the past (Shirky 2009). The connections examined in Chapter 4 are good examples of this type of alliance, with the support offered by the Sierra Club and Amazon Watch expanding the reach of the #SOSPuebloShuar campaign to a much wider audience than would have been possible for CONAIE and CONFENIAE on their own.

Creation of Networking Events

Support networks allow CONAIE and CONFENIAE to organize events with a much greater support base, drawing additional bodies to their protest actions on-the-ground. The increased reach provided by online communication networks, particularly through social media platforms, allows for faster and more effective development of campaigns. CONAIE and CONFENIAE do not use social media purely for the development of events, but also use events to increase the communication potential within their organizations. Many Indigenous peoples have embraced opportunities for training in communication-oriented skills, often beginning with the work of academics and activists.[126] CONAIE and CONFENIAE have gone far beyond the limits of what others offer them externally and have begun to harness the partnerships developed through their support networks to jointly develop improved training opportunities and to critically conceptualize training to most usefully reflect their own goals and needs.

An Example of Successful Networking: The Encuentros Nacionales de Comunicación Comunitaria

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[125] While I do not have financial information of the donations that CONAIE and CONFENIAE have received through these networks, the call for donations is a recurring theme, and is one of the most concrete ways for the organizations to receive support from outside of the country. Often these calls for support are explicitly in aid of a particular goal, such as medical supplies or legal funds.

[126] Terence Turner's work with the Kayapo provides one good example (1991), while other good examples are discussed by Faye Ginsburg (1995, 2002) and within the collection edited by Richard Pace (2018).

The *Encuentros Nacionales de Comunicación Comunitaria* were designed with the intention of bringing together the academic institutions, Indigenous organizations and non-profits of all sizes working to improve representational opportunities in Ecuador. Driven largely by the Facultad de Comunicación Social (FACSO)[127] of the Universidad Central de Ecuador (UCE) in Quito, in collaboration with CONAIE, this annual event is composed of a range of activities, scattered across three days hosted in the FACSO department on the UCE campus, with a further two days held in Puyo at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar. Each of the *Encuentros*[128] focuses on specific communication issues, reflecting the evolving situation within Ecuador, but the themes tend to be linked from one year to the next. The following analyses draw from the data collected during my two fieldwork trips to Ecuador, which overlapped with the third and fourth annual *Encuentros*.

Development and Organizing Principles

The *Encuentros* are intended to provide a unifying event for all the organizations working towards community communication in Ecuador. UNESCO has acknowledged for decades the value of community communication practices and media participation for development, but the creation of these programs and expansion of access have proved difficult (Berrigan 1979). The Ecuadorian government has attempted to incorporate some of these ideals, such as through the development of the *Ley Orgánico de la Comunicación,*[129] and the *Encuentros* have provided an outlet to develop connections between the various community organizers, to discuss the opportunities available, and to address the challenges being faced. Beginning in October 2014, the *Encuentros* have been held each fall (with the exception of those prevented by the COVID-19 pandemic), offering a clear reaction to the communication laws introduced in 2013.

Held principally within FACSO, the events of the *Encuentro* alternate between large presentations, such as keynote addresses, and concurrent sessions scattered throughout the

[127] The Faculty of Social Communication offers programs dedicated to improving community-oriented media and communication practices. Students receive instruction in the creation of print, radio, television, and online media production, for more information visit the departmental website: https://www.uce.edu.ec/web/facso

[128] I use the word *Encuentro* as a shorthand for the full title of these events. The word *Encuentro* simply translates to "Meeting."

[129] The main communication law, discussed briefly in Chapter 3, includes a number of articles that impact community communicators in different ways.

department. This event design reflects the academic nature of the *Encuentros*, following a pattern common in conference planning. The division of the participants into smaller sessions throughout the *Encuentro* allows each person to follow their own interests, also providing a greater breadth of knowledge to the organizations overall. The large presentations, meanwhile, provide a unifying theme to the *Encuentros* that ensures all participants are aware of the most impactful issues under discussion each year.

Participants of the Encuentros

The *Encuentros* have a design that privileges the key partnerships that led to their creation—that between the Indigenous organizations CONAIE and CONFENIAE and the academic institution of FACSO. The major role of Universidad Central de Ecuador and Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar is to act as hosts to the event each year, offering both space and resources that help the organizations involved to successfully bring together a large and diverse group. Additional support network connections are important to the planning of the *Encuentros* as well, mostly with community organizations focused on communication and social justice, such as El Churo communication cooperative, who I would later work with, and Wambra Radio. In some instances, these organizations overlap with the academic allies, as many of their members are current or former students of FACSO. The majority of these participants tend to be from within Ecuador, but the increasing participation of presenters from around the world, particularly South America, provides both connections to other communicators and a broader understanding of the issues being faced in other regions.

Figure 6.3. Poster advertising the 4th *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria* for public attendance at the open workshops, dialogues, round tables, forums, and film festival. Note the list of organizations involved in this *Encuentro* at the bottom of the poster: Organizers include CONAIE, CONFENIAE, El Churo, and FACSO; Assistance from: the European Union, and the Fredrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (a socio-political and economic development organization financed by the German government); Collaborators include: Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Radialistas Apasionadas (NGO focused on democratizing radio), and Café Democratico (a café/bar space in Quito); Media: Tegantai (news association focused on ecology), Wambra Radio, MICC Radio, and Radio FACSO. While this is not a complete list it helps to identify some of the participants in the network that organizes these events, of particular interest is the funding that they receive from Europe, which reflects some of the wider networks that CONAIE has developed over time.

The main portion of the *Encuentros* is open to the public, with a broad invitation being made through social media campaigns through Facebook and Twitter each year to encourage wider participation in the event. Additionally, the third *Encuentro* coincided with the development of a new website that provides information about each upcoming *Encuentro*. Every year there are a few activities that are open only to a subset of the participants, however, who participate in an *Encuentro Interno*. This group consisted primarily of members of the main Indigenous organizations (CONAIE, CONFENIAE, and the Andean regional organization ECUARUNARI), as well as members from some of the local communication organizations, such as El Churo, students and faculty of the Universidad Central de Ecuador and the Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar, and the invited speakers. This subgroup was able to have a much more in-depth dialogue about current communication practices, as all were directly involved in concrete communication activities, such as advocating for community communication rights, managing social media campaigns, or running community radio stations.

I did not have the opportunity to participate in the *Encuentro Interno* during my first fieldwork trip. I had been in Ecuador for a very short period of time before the third annual *Encuentro Nacional* took place in Quito, and I was still in the process of developing my relationship with CONAIE. I had seen the *Encuentro Nacional* advertised on the CONAIE Facebook page, and planned to attend, but I was reassured when Apawki Castro encouraged me to participate as well. During my second fieldwork trip in the fall of 2017, I was invited by Andrés Tapía to take a more active role in the *Encuentro*, becoming an invited participant in the closed activities. Since I had already been planning to attend the *Encuentro* this was a productive extension of the relationship that Andrés and I had begun to build in the first week that I had spent in Puyo, having met twice already to make plans for my further involvement with CONFENIAE.

Participating in this portion of the event was both an inspiring and an intimidating opportunity. This internal meeting included around 70 participants, which began as a single large circle. Each participant was asked to briefly introduce themselves and their affiliations, allowing us all to get a sense for the distribution of the participants. Many of the participants, though still young - university students or an equivalent age, had been participating in communication-based organizing for years, and had participated in all of the *Encuentros*. We began with presentations

from a few of the organizers giving some general overview of what had changed since the last Encuentro and what progress had been made. Following these presentations all of the participants broke into groups to discuss goals for the coming year, and how we could further communication. I felt a bit like an outsider in this context, and while I supported the ideas that my group came up with, I felt that I needed more context in order to understand what would be useful within Ecuador. We had a number of second session following this one where we brought together the ideas from each of the groups, gradually developing a list of concrete goals for the coming year: 1. A campaign of visibility of community media and communication efforts, 2. The creation of a platform to allow organizations to share knowledge, skills and resources, and 3. A series of regional Encuentros before the central event in the following year. This final goal highlighted an issue emerged repeatedly throughout the two Encuentros that I attended—the difficulty of maintaining contact between the bases in remote areas and the communicators based in the center. There never seemed to be a definitive suggestion on how to improve these communication flows, but the camaraderie, passion and dedication always created an optimistic sense that change was possible.

Important Themes and Levels of Involvement

The *Encuentros* reflect the realities taking place in Ecuador at the point when each is planned, and respond to the communication challenges being faced by the organizers. While there are variations from year to year, there were a few overarching themes that I saw carried across the two *Encuentros* that I participated in, and that echoed some of the key themes I had also seen in CONAIE and CONFENIAE's communication strategies.

The first of these themes was a reaction to the legal framework that Ecuador had put in place around communication, largely relating to the *Ley Orgánica de la Comunicación*. The third *Encuentro* emphasized the need for free and equal communication and representational opportunities. Each of the schedules shown provides an outline for one of the three days of the *Encuentro* at FACSO, presenting the main topics of each forum and workshop.

Figure 6.4. Schedule for the first day of the 3rd *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. Note the use of graphics referencing networks. The morning and early afternoon were closed events reserved for the invited participants. A series of opening events began at 14:30, including an ancestral ceremony, welcome speeches, and an opening forum and keynote on the theme of community communication and power disputes: "Challenges of community communication in the construction of a common agenda." The remainder of the evening was taken up by a series of concurrent roundtables, dealing with the topics 1. Expression and communication in cities, 2. Community communication in territories in dispute, and 3. Gender, feminism and communication, as well as concurrently showing a community film.

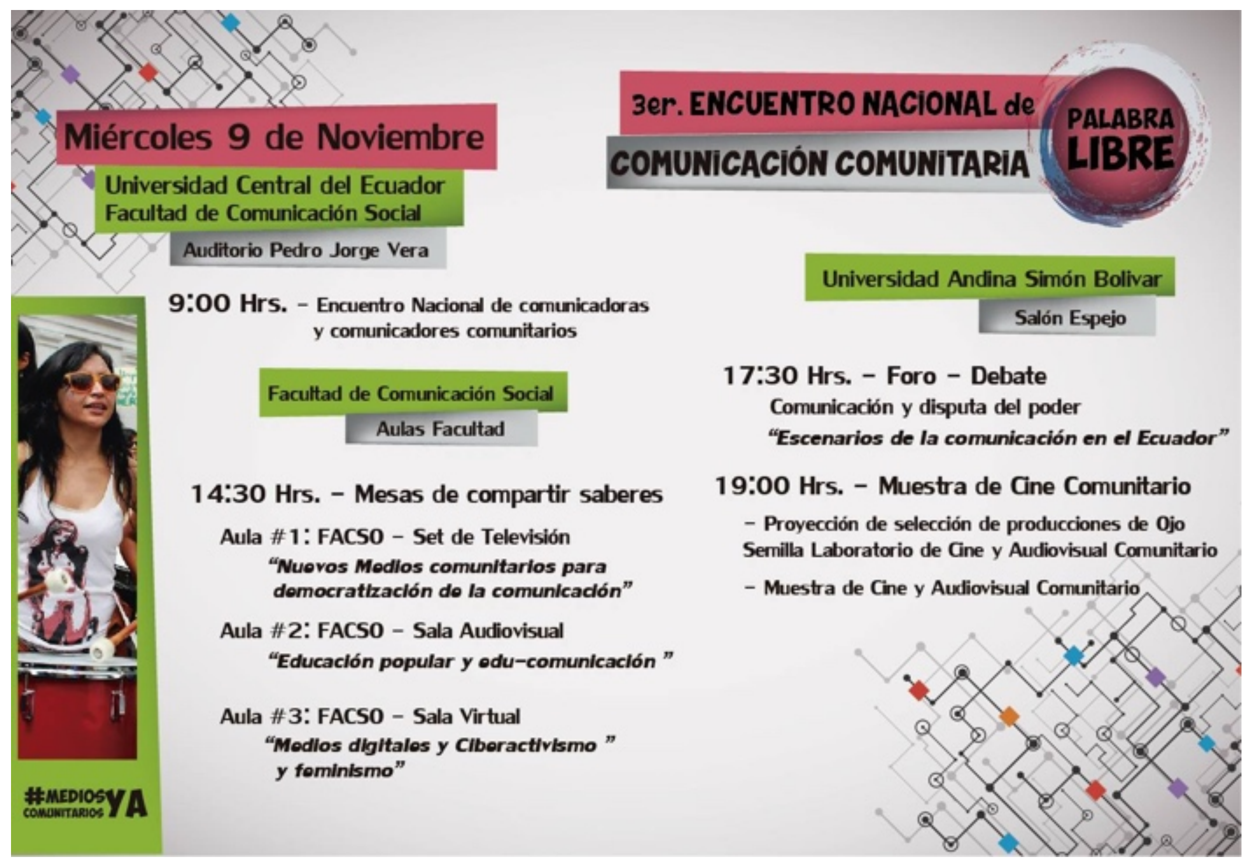

Figure 6.5. Schedule for the second day of the 3rd *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. The morning and early afternoon were again closed events reserved for the invited participants. A second set of round tables were held at 14:30, focusing on the topics 1. New community media for democratization of communication, 2. Popular education and edu-communication, and 3. Digital media, cyberactivism and feminism. In the evening offered a debate on communication and power disputes with the topic "Communication scenarios in Ecuador," before concluding with another community film project.

Figure 6.6. Schedule for the third day of the 3rd *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. The majority of the day was taken up by open workshops on a variety of communication methods, including film, radio, cyberactivism, journalism, and digital animation. The event was concluded with a final forum on communication and power disputes entitled "The contribution of community communication to social organizations," followed by a cultural event of closing from CONAIE.

Many of the events, both large and small, included discussions of Ecuador's laws related to communication. The opening forum of the *Encuentro* highlighted these issues clearly, setting the tone for the entire event. Speakers from academic and organizational backgrounds emphasized the specifics of the *Ley Orgánica*, emphasizing the need for communities and organizations to take control of the means of communication, and to use this opportunity to share information that was being silenced by government and commercial sources. These themes continued throughout the *Encuentro*, with similar emphasis during both the Debate Forum and the Closing Forum on the remaining two days. The fourth *Encuentro* saw the continuation of the discussions about the use of radio and the legal frameworks for frequency distribution, but political uncertainty made these much less prominent topics. As this *Encuentro* took place early in Moreno's presidency, it

was still unclear how the government would approach community communication. Other challenges were very clear, however, and the high cost of acquiring radio equipment, the need to train multiple radio operators, and the susceptibility of radio equipment to damage (sometimes intentional) all act as barriers to this as a viable communication form.

During the fourth *Encuentro* there was a much stronger focus on the second of the two main themes: the increasing importance of online communication methods. This shift reflects a changing media landscape with increasing accessibility through mobile technologies and the incorporation of social media into many people's daily lives.[130] The third *Encuentro* had also dealt some with issues of online communication practices, including discussions of cyberactivism. These forums highlighted two important areas: the challenges inherent in online communication and concrete examples of successful online projects. While the examples are interesting, the discussion of challenges is vital, as it emphasizes the awareness of organizers in Ecuador of the shortcomings of online communication methods and whether they can be overcome. One example of this type of discussion was a presentation and subsequent conversation about the impact of echo chambers with Efren Guerrero from the Law department of the Pontifica Universidad Católica del Ecuador. Similarly, the challenge of encouraging participation from purely online activism towards protest event participation was discussed at length, particularly in reference to the difficulty of encouraging youth to make this transition.[131]

[130] See chapters 3 through 5 for a more complex discussion of these issues.

[131] The presentation that spurred this debate emphasized the fact that youth (14-25 year old) comprise almost 80% of Internet users in Ecuador, a group that is seen as apathetic and less likely to participate in protest events.

Figure 6.7. Schedule for the first day of the 4th *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. The day began with an inaugural event, moving directly into two forums, the first titled "New community media and distribution of frequencies," and the second titled "Amazonian communication, ancestral knowledge, defense of rights and territory: construction of other understandings." During the afternoon, the internal *Encuentro* was held for invited participants, with all participants invited to gather at the Centre of Democratic Art for the celebration of Wambra Radio's new platform.

The discussions from the third to the fourth *Encuentros* showed a shift in the perspective towards online communication, and particularly social media, with a much more positive outlook

developing. The increased focus on uses of online communication methods may have been influenced by the impact of online campaigns, such as the #SOSPubeloShuar campaign discussed in Chapter 5. One example of this shift was the main presentation entitled *Nuevas narrativas digitales comunitarias,*[132] given by the professor and journalist Omar Rincón from Colombia. Focusing on the transitions that need to be made for more effective communication online, his talk included discussions of creating narrative, moving from a culture of written communication to one of visual and oral communication, using hyperlinks to create flow of information, and transforming audience into participants in the creation of communication. All of these elements arose in discussions that I had with CONAIE and CONFENIAE's Communication Directors throughout the final months of my research.[133]

Figure 6.8. Schedule for the second day of the 4th *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. This day began with the internal *Encuentro* for invited participants. Beginning at 14:00 was a set of concurrent round tables covering the topics of: 1. Communication, gender and feminisms, 2. Experiences and visions of communication

[132] New digital community narratives – this was the title used during the event, which was changed from that shown in the schedule.

[133] This close relationship between the interests of the organizations and the topics covered during the Encuentros helps to highlight the closely interwoven nature of these events with the organizations' communication practices—the organizations are heavily involved with the planning of the Encuentros, which helps to ensure that their interests are reflected in the topics that are covered, but there are also topics, such as knowledge silos, which they encounter through their interaction with other communicators. This is a two-way street of knowledge sharing and production, which helps to inform the practices of all parties.

from social and popular organizations, 3. Communication and defense of rights, 4a. Challenges and stakes of communication networks in the Amazon, 4b. Amazonian cosmovisions: communicate from the life of the Amazon, and 5. Communication, digital media and community narratives. After some general greetings and announcements there were two further large forums to end the day: "The situation of community communication in Ecuador," and "Digital media and new narratives: Territories of dispute in the communication sector."

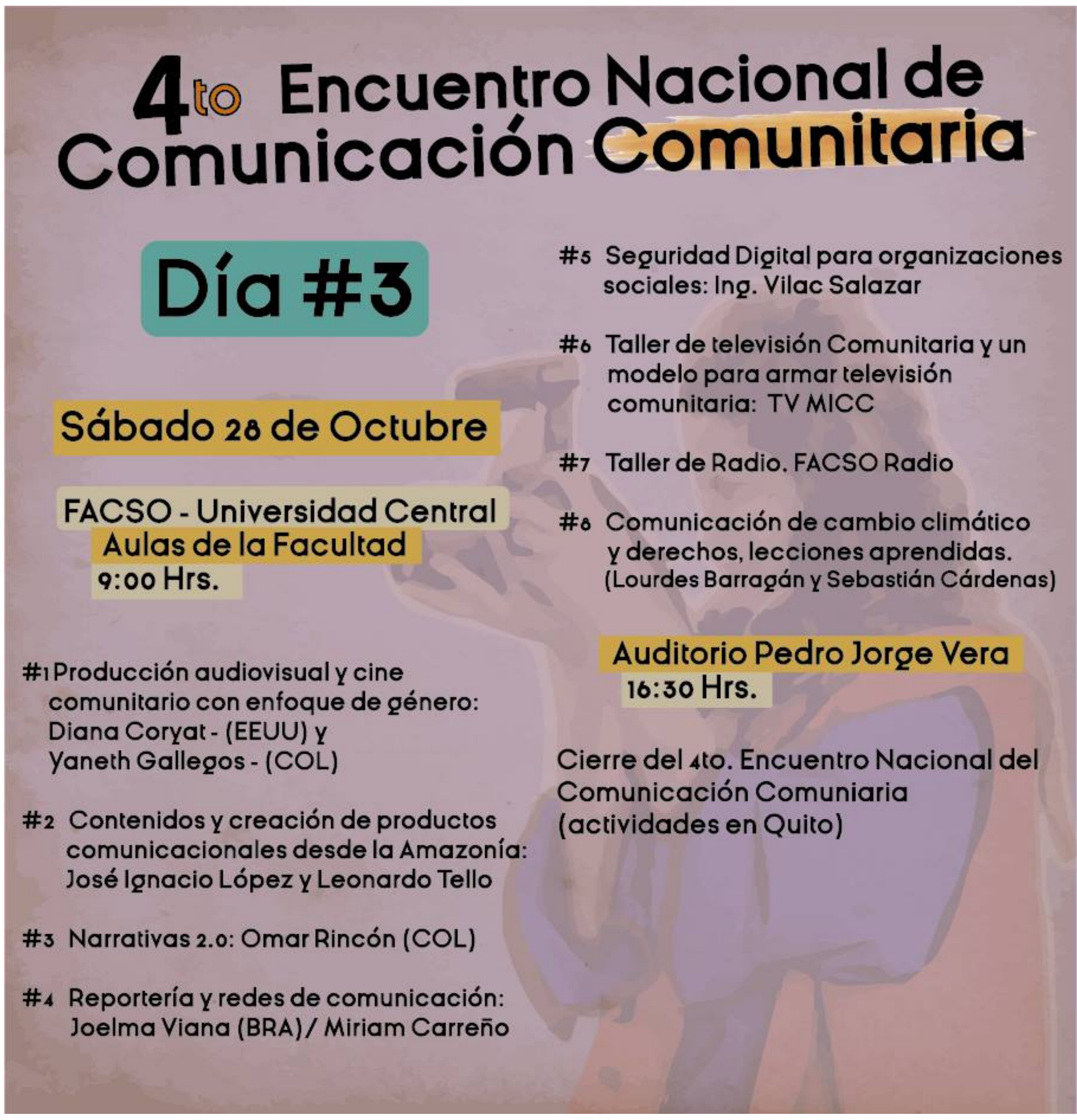

Figure 6.9. Schedule for the third day of the 4th *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*. This day was focused on a series of workshops with defined goals: 1. Audiovisual and film production with a gender focus, 2. Contents and creation of communication products from the Amazon, 3. Narratives 2.0, 4. Reporting and

communication networks, 5. Digital security for social organizations, 6. Workshop on community television and a model to assemble community television, 7. Radio workshop, and 8. Communication of climate change and rights, lessons learned. After the workshops finished a closing ceremony was held in the main auditorium.

Finally, the third theme was most clearly articulated during the third *Encuentro* by Katy Betancourt Machoa of CONAIE and Jorge Cano from *El Churo*, who both emphasized the diversity of many of the organizations, and the wide range of issues and needs that have to be supported by communication practices. Their presentations highlighted the importance of self-representation and the importance of democratizing communication not only in the wider society, but also within organizations. The focus given to feminism during the third *Encuentro* also highlighted this need for greater breadth of representation, while discussing some of the challenges faced by women in particular as community communicators. Women tend to have fewer opportunities for acquiring skills and knowledge, and while the participation of men and women in the *Encuentros* felt equivalent, I observed in my own work some of the limitations that women face, and which I discuss in Chapter 7. Main topics covered during the fourth *Encuentro* included a number of events focusing on the intersection of communication and community vision or narrative, providing a way to build ideas of cohesive organizations through the use of media.

The images used to advertise each of the *Encuentros*, such as the poster for the fourth *Encuentro* seen in Figure 6.3, as well as the daily schedules for the third *Encuentro* in Figures 6.4 to 6.6, all demonstrate this interest in representing diverse interests. All of these images were available on social media accounts associated with the *Encuentros*, and are now available through a dedicated website as well. For the third *Encuentro*, the posters highlight young participants. The first of these, showing a man who appears to be University age holding a piece of equipment is slightly ambiguous as the use of the equipment is not immediately apparent. The second, however, shows a young woman in an active role of protest.[134] The strong focus on women's roles is supported by images like this one, placing women in a central place within movements. The third of these images, that of the young boy using the video camera highlights the inclusion of a group that I

[134] This photo can immediately be interpreted by anyone who has seen an urban protest such as that described in the vignette associated with figure 6.2. The large squads of drummers are frequently mixed gender groups that are highly visible in urban protests.

did not actually see during the *Encuentros*. While I occasionally saw children in the meeting spaces of the *Encuentros*, they tended to be too young to participate in the discussions and were accompanying their parents. They were always welcomed within the space, and their potential noise and disruptions were accepted in a way that they would not be in North American conferences. I felt that this accommodation made the spaces of the *Encuentros* much more welcoming to women in particular, and was an extension of a more general openness to children throughout my experiences in Ecuador. The poster for the fourth *Encuentro* presents a slight contrast, again including people of different ages. Of the three figures only one is a young man, who is speaking or singing into a microphone, the other two are women. The central figure, a woman of indeterminate age, is taking photographs while the final figure is an older woman speaking into a megaphone. Again, this third context is familiar though it is seen in a wider range of contexts. Megaphones were common at protests during my time in Ecuador, but were also very common during *Asambleas* and *Consejos Amplios*,[135] which were held for Indigenous nationalities or organizations and presented the opportunity for any community member to speak. These visuals seem to aim at appealing to a broad audience of all ages and genders, presenting an inclusive appearance for potential participants.

There were two other notable themes that I was able to observe through the fourth *Encuentro*. First was the increasing focus given to the Amazonian experience of communication, a region that faces different communication challenges than peoples and communities in the Andes.[136] In addition to participating in the *Encuentro Interno*, I was also able to expand my involvement in the fourth *Encuentro* by attending the portion hosted at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar in Puyo. While most of CONFENIAE's participants had already participated in the majority of the *Encuentro* that had taken place in Quito, some who had been unable to travel were able to participate for this shorter period of time.[137] This additional time offered an opportunity for deeper consideration of the situation in the Amazon, which presents some unique communication

[135] These two types of gatherings, the first translating to Assemblies and the second roughly translating to Broad Advisories, provide open forums for community decision making within the organizations.

[136] These differences were discussed in chapters 2 and 3, in relation to the history of Indigenous organizations in Ecuador.

[137] Those who were able to attend in Quito were provided with travel, as well as room and board by CONFENIAE in conjunction with the university. This support provided opportunities for more communicators from the Amazon to participate than had been possible in the past, increasing the presence of diverse perspectives at the *Encuentro*.

challenges, including lack of access to communication infrastructure, dispersed populations, and difficult transportation between remote communities. These final discussions also provided an opportunity to focus on the territorial focus of the rights campaigns in the Amazon, and how that is reflected in communications practices.

Figure 6.10. Schedule for the fourth and fifth days of the 4th *Encuentro Nacional de Comunicación Comunitaria*, held in Puyo. The fourth day was composed entirely of an internal *Encuentro* for invited participants from the Amazon. The next day began with welcoming presentations, followed by a public forum entitled “Construction of narratives, symbols, methodologies in communication from the Amazon.” A series of concurrent round tables followed to wrap up the event in the Amazon, covering the themes: 1. Narrating the Amazon, 2. Popular, social and community organization in communication: practices and lessons in the Amazon, and 3. Amazonian women and communication.

Involvement in the *Encuentro Interno* provided access to more of the discussion related to the representations decisions that were being made on a daily basis by organizations. While most of the workshops and events are open to the public, as discussed previously, the activities that are open only to invited participants provide a much greater level of involvement in the

communication strategies of the organizations. During these events community organizers and academics plan collaborative communication projects, such as training opportunities and campaigns, and address the pressing issues that are common to all communication activists in the country. During this *Encuentro Interno*, there were two main themes and a number of propositions formulated. The first theme that emerged touched on the sustainability of communication systems, emphasizing both the need for financial stability and for the need to maintain knowledge and skills within the organizations. These two challenges were seen as separate, with the second being somewhat easier to overcome, with the development of programs to pass knowledge from one media creator to the next. The second thematic focus emphasized the connections between organizations and individual media creators. The propositions made for the future improvement of community communication included the development of a campaign to increase the visibility of community communication projects, the creation of specializations or degrees in community communication within Ecuadorian universities, the creation of an online platform for organizations to better share resources and collaborate on projects, and proposals for the development of a series of themed regional *Encuentros* prior to the 5to *Encuentro Nacional*. These types of statements are made each year in the manifesto produced during the *Encuentros*, which are presented at the closing ceremony of each *Encuentro*, providing an opportunity for contributions from those who were not part of the *Encuentro Interno*.

The topics covered under these themes represent only a few of the debates occurring within the *Encuentros*, and even those evolve in reaction to current interests of the organizers of the event. There are other areas of interest that are more general and seem to be sustained topics that overarch specific communication themes, such as the relationship between communication and the defense of Indigenous territory.

Outcomes and Impacts of the Encuentros

The *Encuentros Nacionales* have a number of benefits for CONAIE and CONFENIAE. Many of the benefits relate to the development of connections and relationships by the organizations. The *Encuentros* provide an opportunity for close contact with other organizations or NGOs, academia, and professional communicators such as journalists, with the chance to develop support networks for communication practices. For Indigenous communities in more rural parts

of Ecuador, including the Amazon, the development of relationships with communicators from the capital provides a chance to increase the visibility of their messages within the country, overcoming some of the communication issues they face themselves.

As Andrés Tapía emphasized in one of our earliest conversations, opportunities for youth to improve their technical and leadership skills are one of the most notable benefits of the *Encuentros* (interview conducted on October 22, 2017). Throughout the event, youth from the organizations take a prominent role in discussing the changes that need to be made to communication strategies and the ways in which communication practices can be improved. They are also invited to lead activities, often in collaboration with allied groups. El Churo is one of the groups that is most active during the *Encuentros*, with membership that also includes some current and former students from the FACSO programs, and whose members often work closely with Indigenous youth. This organization is dedicated to improving community communication throughout Ecuador more generally, and is often aligned with other broad organizations and movements, such students or environmentalists. Groups such as El Churo act as an essential node in the network of communicators, providing connections between organizations that may have shared interests.

Much of the work that these youth do during the *Encuentros* highlights concrete problems for Indigenous communicators and responds to the current political situation. For example, during the second of the *Encuentros* that I attended, there was a large amount of discussion about the challenges that communities had faced in trying to receive their radio frequencies.[138] The third *Encuentro* had focused heavily on what the process was supposed to be to obtain those frequencies, and the development of communicators' experience with the process was evident in the shift of discussion. Changing goals and orientations were evident in other examples as well, such as the increasing focus on online communication mentioned before.

[138] Radio frequencies and community radio are important issues because of the lack of mobile data infrastructure in many of the more remote communities. While they would not be able to access online sources of information, community radio can fill the gap. The frequencies being managed within communities provides many of the same benefits as social media platforms, allowing for information to be distributed directly between Indigenous peoples.

The format of the *Encuentros* and the heavy involvement of academia has the benefit of exposing communicators from across Ecuador to theoretical communication issues that are being considered within academic circles, but that might not be otherwise widely discussed. Discussions about the impact of cyberactivism for protest events, the democratization of communication practices with Web 2.0 technologies, and the issues of transparency, privacy and control over the sharing of information were all prevalent during the fourth *Encuentro*. The emphasis on these topics allowed for a forum for debate about how these issues impact media activists and communication strategists, and the ways communication systems can be used to the best possible advantage.

All of these benefits of the *Encuentros Nacionales* reflect the way in which they fit within the larger structure of the communication strategy of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. The annual event gives both organizations an opportunity to evaluate their current situation and make concrete plans to move forward in the coming year.[139]

Communication Events and Support Networks

The annual *Encuentro Nacional* provides one example of how a communication-oriented event can provide insight into wider media practices and help to develop support networks that can augment the communication skills of media producers. The impacts of these exchanges are twofold: the sharing of knowledge and resources for more effective support of communication practices, and the encouragement of diverse perspectives in media production, broadening opportunities for media sovereignty by providing Indigenous peoples with the capacity to create media on their own terms. This chapter provides the jumping off point for a series of networks with the potential to rupture established power structures. These networked forms, while all focused around issues of communication, extend well beyond those limitations to impact capacities for change throughout the organizations and beyond them.

[139] A video summarizing the work of the fourth *Encuentro* is available on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/comunicacioncomunitariaec/videos/1991355441147015/

The next two chapters will focus on two other types of events that utilize support networks in the context of CONAIE and CONFENIAE's representational practices. The first is an example of training workshops intended to improve the visual communication skills of CONFENIAE's members. Both CONAIE and CONFENIAE have a strong focus on expanding the skills and knowledge of their members, and pursue training opportunities whenever they arise. Chapter 7 describes a short series of workshops, interwoven with other training opportunities offered at the same time, focusing on photography skills for youth. My presence, as a visual anthropologist in Puyo, was an opportunity for CONFENIAE to boost a specific skillset of their members and shift the methods of representation being used on social media.

The event discussed in Chapter 8 provides an example of communication at work, where communication itself is not the focus of the event, but rather becomes a supporting activity. This is the role that is most commonly discussed around communication—the support that it offers for specific campaigns. Examples of this type of event can include protests, marches, meetings or debates. These events are the classic example of communication being directly interwoven into the activities of an organization, as they highlight the ways in which representation online is interrelated with other events and activities. Looking at social media use, photography, and interactions with mass media outlets during a march will provide an example of the ways in which representational practice flows through social media contexts and protest events.

Each of these examples of events will continue to highlight the ways in which support networks help CONAIE and CONFENIAE to harness the media available for their direct use, such as social media, and the ways in which they are able to influence the representation being produced in the mass media.

Chapter 7: The Creation of Visual Communication and the Role of Photovoice

Figure 7.1. Photo of equipment for photovoice workshops sitting on the table in CONFENIAE's workshop space. Photo by author.

Andrés welcomed me outside of the building, introducing me to the participants that had gathered for the workshop. We greeted each other politely and exchanged a little small talk before moving up the stairs to the meeting room to begin setting up. I was seeing this room for the first time, and it reflected the style of the rest of the building, wooden construction decorated with some of the banners that were used by the organization during their campaigns. As I spread out the equipment, I encouraged the participants to begin playing around with the cameras, to begin to get familiar with the settings. I took a deep breathe, looking over the notes that I had written out. Andrés and I had planned an introduction to photography for this first workshop, and I had spent the previous few days making sure that I knew all of the Spanish terms for the

photography concepts that I was going to cover. Everyone sat down, chatting casually as we settled into a circle to begin talking about photography in the context of the organization's online representation.

The vignette above describes my arrival for the first photovoice workshop, which is described later in this chapter. The workshops that I offered during my fieldwork became one of the most impactful ways that I was introduced to the organizations' communities and allowed me to develop stronger connections with my research participants. These workshops allowed me to provide an active contribution to CONFENIAE's goals of community media creation, offering access to my own skills and an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the perspectives that organizational members held about visual media's usefulness within rights campaigns and in furthering the broader political goals of the organizations. These workshops also offered an opportunity to exploit an ongoing rupture from the hierarchical form of representation that is inherent when media creation is controlled in fewer hands.

This chapter begins with a description of the planning and execution of the photovoice workshops that I organized as a researcher in collaboration with the organizations, moves into a discussion of the themes that materialized from the research, and then considers some of the benefits and challenges that emerged from the process. The chapter will end with a consideration of the way that the workshops fit into the overall research project.

Photovoice as a Research Method

From the beginning of my research planning, one of my main goals was to find a way to positively contribute to the Indigenous organizations that I would be working with in Ecuador. As I was focusing on visual methods and online media, I sought an option that would complement these research areas, and would provide an opportunity to generate data that would prove useful both within my project and for the organizations' own communication practices. Photography seemed like an obvious choice that met all of the requirements, being something that is often used in communication online, and as a medium that can be used by people of all ages and backgrounds to communicate concepts and issues emerged.

Visual methods are increasingly been used in anthropological research as a way to gain insight into themes that may not emerge from standard ethnographic research methods (Pink 2007; Zainuddin 2009). Photovoice is one of the ways in which arts-based practice has been tailored to better function as a research tool. Developed for use within public health research by Wang and Burris (1997), photovoice is a process in which participants are given cameras, provided with some basic instruction in the technical aspects of camera use if necessary, asked to take photos demonstrating a theme, and are then brought back together to discuss the photos they took. The process also often includes sharing the photos at some kind of event or exposition after the completion of the discussions (Beh, Bruyere and Lolosoli 2013; Photovoice 2020; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001).

This basic framework has been modified and adapted innumerable times to fit specific situations, including the number of people involved, the type of equipment used, how specific the given instructions are, and the way in which the photos are revisited after they are taken. Many examples exist of the variations that have been made around photovoice, and the ways in which photovoice has helped to generate data and insights. Working with deaf youth in Mexico, for example, Anne Pfister followed a project format that was close to the original framework, but also discussed the challenges of balancing research interests with activist representational opportunities (2020). Within his work with Somali immigrants in Delhi, in contrast, Ethiraj Dattatreyan found that a visual project created collaboratively from existing social media posts allowed for the breakdown of traditional power divisions between participants and researchers (2015). In a project with similar collaborative goals, Kaitlin Banfill developed a portrait project that balanced the desire of Nuosu Yi youth in China with the mainstream visual narratives (2020). Laurian Bowles acknowledges the generative nature of photovoice, which provides opportunities for the visual to provide avenues to consider "embodied sensibilities" (2017, 109). While not often emphasized, one of the benefits of this method is the flexibility that it provides researchers, allowing them to find modifications that work within their context.

Photography has always been an interest of mine personally, something I have pursued as a hobby for many years. After deciding to incorporate it into my research project I sought to expand on my own knowledge and skill set, taking online courses while I was in Ecuador during

my first fieldwork trip to expand my own knowledge of composition and technique. While I took these courses for my own benefit outside of my research agenda, it worked out well, since I ended up using some of the instructional ideas used within the courses when I later designed my own workshops. My own skillset was useful for balancing the needs of the organizations with the needs of the research project, allowing me to successfully gain insights through dialogue and collaborative creative practice while also providing some benefit to the participants.

Figure 7.2. Photo of a street in downtown Puyo in the rain as seen from the balcony of the Café Escobar. Photo by author.

I ran inside from the street, ducking to avoid the rain as it began to pour. I walked up the stairs of the café in the center of Puyo as I dripped from my sopping hair and clothes, waving to the waitress as I went up to take a table on the upstairs balcony. The waitress brought me a beer as Andrés walked up to join me. We had already met at this restaurant before to plan my initial set of workshops, and now we were meeting again to plan the second set of Photovoice workshops. This group of workshops was going to be held in the various communities, but we were having to work around the march that the organization had planned in the last week. The café was quiet, with the sides open to the weather letting a cool breeze through. We chatted about the various details of travel and the local participants I would be travelling with and who would be helping me to coordinate with the local community organizations. Towards the end of the meeting Andrés pulled out a scrap of paper with the rough plans scribbled on it, walking me through the planned itinerary and talking about how the march would impact the attendance of the workshops. As Andrés got up to leave, I settled in to eat a burger with plantain chips and write out some of my own plans to prep for the workshops.

Figure 7.3. Map of Ecuador showing the locations of the Photovoice workshops overlaying the roads and cellular infrastructure. Map created by author.

Photovoice Workshop Design and Execution

I originally proposed a very traditional format for the photovoice workshops that I was hoping to carry out with CONAIE and CONFENIAE. The plan was to provide groups of youth from the organizations with cameras, send them out to take photos demonstrating a theme that we chose as a group, and then bring them back together to discuss the photos. In discussions with the Communication Director and the Youth Director of CONAIE during January 2017, it became

immediately apparent that they saw photography as an area that could have additional benefits for the organizations, providing a chance to expand the communication to a larger number of organizational members. By expanding the number of members participating in communication activities like posting to social media allows the organizations to create a more diffuse communication structure. Working together, the Directors and I elaborated a plan to develop the workshops into lessons to improve the communication potential of youth in the organization.

Using money for a $1500 grant from the Centre for Youth and Society at the University of Victoria, I bought 6 Olympus SZ-14 digital cameras to use during the workshops and to donate to the organizations after the completion of my research. Unfortunately, this first series of workshops never occurred because of scheduling conflicts, but I kept the basic idea of instructional photography workshops, approaching the Communication Director of CONFENIAE, Andrés Tapía, during my second research trip in October 2017. Andrés was willing to help organize the workshops, and we established a plan to provide a series of photography training workshops to a core group of youth within the organization. We would then expand to offer workshops in smaller communities represented by the organization after the initial series of workshops had been completed, using the core group of participants as assistants. The idea of workshops appealed to Andrés as part of CONFENIAE's larger communication program, which participates in and organizes events to improve the communication skills of their members (such as the *Encuentros Nacionales de Comunicación* discussed in the previous chapter). CONFENIAE's reliance on social media platforms also means that their members are often posting images that become associated with the organization, so improving the technical competence of the photos being taken by members helps to improve their overall communication quality. While this was not the intended purpose of the workshops within the context of my fieldwork, the needs of the organization had to be balanced with the creation of data through the discussions of the photos.

The three initial photography workshops that made up the series were carried out with a relatively stable group of ten youth from CONFENIAE, who I refer to throughout as the "core group" of participants. Andrés handled the recruitment of this group, inviting youth that he specifically knew to be interested in communication and photography, then opening the

opportunity to additional youth through their communities. This group signed up to participate in a series of three workshops, studying a variety of aspects of photography. The workshops progressed from a general design to a more specific one over the course of the series, including increasing amounts of discussion about the themes to use when taking photos and about the photos afterwards. Table 1 shows the basic design of the workshops, the level of participation in each one, and the number of images captured during each day of the workshops. Each workshop will be discussed in further detail below.

Date	Length	Workshop Location	Number of Participants	Collaborators	Number of Images Captured
November 7-8, 2017	2-days, 8-hour sessions broken by lunch	CONFENIAE headquarters	10 on first day; 11 on second day	CONFENIAE	Day 1 – Photos: 598 Videos: 3 Day 2 – Photos: 631
November 15-17, 2017	3 hours on Nov. 15; 4 hours on Nov. 16 – part of broader 2-day media workshop	CONFENIAE headquarters; Downtown Puyo	5 core group on first day; 33 total (8 core group) on second and third days	CONFENIAE; CONAIE; El Churo	Day 1 - Photos: 250 Day 2 - Photos: 613 Videos: 3
November 21-22, 2017	2-days, 8-hour session broken by lunch first day; 4 hours second day	Yaka Runa	15 total (7 core group)	CONFENIAE; community of Yaka Runa	Photos: 913 Videos: 3
November 29, 2017	1-day workshop, 8-hour session broken by lunch	Tiwintza	3 total (1 core group)	CONFENIAE; Shuar Arutam	Photos: 28
December 5, 2017	1-day workshop, 8-hour session broken by lunch	Tena	17 total (1 core group)	CONFENIAE; Nación Originaria Quijos (NAOQUI)	Photos: 341 Videos: 4

Table 1: Photovoice Workshop Participation

Workshop 1

The first of these workshops, held at CONFENIAE's headquarters in Unión Base just outside of Puyo, Ecuador, focused on general photographic concepts, including what draws a viewer's eye and the way that framing can affect the strength of a photo. This workshop established the format

that all of the workshops would generally follow with some modifications. We began in the morning with the informed consent process, as I provided a verbal description of the project and how the information would be used, and had each of the participants fill out a consent form, answering questions as necessary. This is a process that I went through with each subsequent group of participants as well, ensuring that they all understood how each type of data might be used and given their consent. The majority of the morning was spent in a discussion of photography techniques, using example photographs that I had taken myself during my time in Ecuador and printed to use in the workshops. This workshop focused on how to draw the eye using line, texture and color, and the concepts of perspective, vantage point, and the creation of visual relationships. Before ending the morning session, we also took time to review the use of the cameras. While a couple of the youth had DSLRs of their own to use, and a couple of others were familiar with digital cameras, most had only used the mobile phones to take photos in the past and needed instructions in how to change the various settings on the camera. The afternoon and the following morning were dedicated time for the youth to take photos, being asked to focus on the skills and concepts that we had spent the morning discussing, without a focus on a specific theme for their photos during this first workshop. We had a brief check-in both after the afternoon session and before they began the following morning to revisit the skills they had been asked to emphasize.

Figure 7.4. Researcher teaching a participant about the camera options, photo by Jesús.

The second afternoon was dedicated to discussing their experience and looking at the photos that they had taken. During the break on the second day, I downloaded the photos from each of the cameras onto my computer. As CONFENIAE's headquarters did not have projection equipment, we used the screen of my laptop to view the photos, gathering close together and taking turns as necessary. This first workshop helped to identify the need for greater discussion of the photos taken, and of the themes that they represented. While the youth participating became increasingly more comfortable sharing their opinions and perspectives with me as a researcher over the course of the two days, they tended to focus on their experiences taking the photos and on the technical quality of the photos during our final discussion. Because of this focus on the experience there was limited information that could be used in the research, and this weakness was something that I sought to improve in the design of the remaining workshops.

Workshop 2

The second workshop was held in two parts, the first with a small number of the core participants at Unión Base, providing an in-depth discussion of issues specific to taking photos of people, both through street photography and portraiture. This first day was organized as a shortened version of the two-day format used during the first workshop, providing an introduction in the first part of the morning, time to take photographs just before and after lunch, and a final discussion of their experiences and concerns. The main goal of this first portion of the workshop was to give the core participants enough background to act as mentors to the 25 new participants within groups during the larger workshop to be held the next day.

The second part of the workshop was held over two days at the Centro de Formación Pastoral Intipungo in downtown Puyo, organized with CONFENIAE and CONAIE, and held in conjunction with an Ecuadorian organization called El Churo. This organization focuses on the uses of communication by the community, including radio, print and social media, and encourages youth to develop active voices in politics and social issues. The photovoice portion of the workshop was intended to complement the larger workshop that had already been planned before the photography workshops began, and which focused on the use of visual communication methods.

After a short introduction to the focus of the workshop as a whole, we began with the photography portion of the workshop, again following a similar format to previous workshops. I gave a short introduction to basic photography concepts, as well as having a more focused introduction on taking photos of people, including key aspects of portraiture and street photography. With one of the core participants as a mentor, groups were then sent out with instructions to take a combination of portraits and street photos, wither using members of the group as models or finding people on the streets that were comfortable participating.[140]

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[140] While I had been sure to get permission from each of the participants as part of the informed consent process at the beginning of the workshop both to use photos they took and that they were shown in, I intentionally chose not to use photovoice photos of people whose permission I could not seek (such as random people on the street) within my work. This consideration is different from photos that were taken during the Marcha discussed in the following chapter, which were taken and used with permission from the organizations. Even with permission I tend to select photos that do not show people's faces as a way to respect the privacy of my colleagues and participants. Being transparent about the planned use of photos is a topic we discussed at length during the workshops, and which the participants were particularly passionate about.

Figure 7.5. Participant group practicing portrait photography, photo by member of second workshop group.

Groups came back for lunch, when the photos were downloaded onto the laptop so that they could be projected for the whole group to see during the discussion. Following the lunch break, we wrapped up by having each group share a couple of the photos that they had taken and describe their experience. They were asked to compare the experience of taking portraits and taking photos of people on the street. Most of the participants gave generalized descriptions, discussing where they had chosen to go, who they had photographed, and how they felt about the process.

Once we completed the photography portion of the workshop, we moved into a discussion on graphic design and a series of activities to engage participants' creative thinking. Participants then worked on poster designs focused on assigned themes, ending the day by completing hand

drawn versions. The following day each group first presented the concept for their poster, before beginning to design a digital version using a free app demonstrated by El Churo.

One of the themes that emerged time and time again in the discussions was the experience and challenges of taking photos as an Indigenous person in Ecuador. Many of the youth involved in the workshop, including some of the core participants, had had negative experiences when taking photos outside of their own communities. It is considered rude to take photos of people without permission, making it difficult to take spontaneous shots of people in the streets. Youth are often asked by people in the street who they are, what they are doing, and are frequently told to stop taking photos. For that reason, when taking photos for organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE, youth are often provided with press credentials, allowing them more freedom of movement and some protection from harassment by officials. In situations where Indigenous peoples are taking photos of conflicts, such as those with police, military, or employees of extractive multinationals, the potential for harassment is high. As an outsider I was essentially forgiven for taking photos of people, likely under the assumption that I was a tourist. For the youth participants from the organizations, however, there is distrust of their motives in taking photos. Though all of the participants in the workshop had been told to explain who they were and to ask permission before taking photos of people, there was still reluctance from some people to agree. This subject came up during the initial workshop day with the core group, and then emerged again as a topic during the main workshop as well. The difference of my own experiences from those of the youth made it difficult for me to provide solid advice in how they should behave. To address these issues, the workshop ended with a discussion of ways to approach photography in protest situations led jointly by myself and the Ecuadorian organization El Churo members. We began with an introduction taken from a variety of films, including Shock Doctrine, a video from Witness, and a portion of the Occupy the Movie documentary, then moving on to discuss how strategies shown in the films translated to the Ecuadorian context. Within Ecuador there is an expectation that photographers will ask permission to take photos of people on the street, and the group from El Churo advised the youth to always ask permission before taking photos and to inform the photo's subject of what the photo could be used for (such as whether it is intended for social media or to be shared with mass media outlets). In some cases, this is not possible or advisable however, such as those conflict situations mentioned

above, but also in situations where a photographer wants to capture the activities of a person without influencing their behavior. I had discussed these situations with my core participants, and we had agreed that in some situations it was beneficial to take photos first before explaining who you were and what you were doing. Since youth will likely continue to take photos documenting conflicts between their communities and the government or multinational corporations this will continue to be an issue throughout their lives, as their physical safety may be put in direct opposition to creating evidence of these conflicts.

Figure 7.6. Photo of the foot bridge entering the small community of Yaka Runa. Photo by author.

Our group steps off the bus in what feels like a very remote area, but is only about an hour outside of Puyo. The transition from urban center to rainforest occurs quickly, and we had watched the change through the bus windows as we left the populated areas and were gradually surrounded by green. The community of Yaka Runa is a small one, with no electricity or running

water, but with a strong sense of support among the individuals from four different Indigenous peoples. This community, established for pisciculture, spans a shallow river, with bridging pathways leading from the two-lane highway up to the community itself perched on a hillside. The community's youth stream out of the community centre building beside the highway to meet us as the bus pulls away, greeting their friends who have been away in Puyo. This is a progressive community, blending traditions from their various peoples, while also explicitly emphasizing the ecologically friendly lifestyle. The community centre is here by the highway to provide them a place to greet groups of tourists and highlight their community. Their leader is also one of the youth standing in front of us. He looks to be in his early 20s, but may be even younger, confidently smiling as he tells us we will be staying on a covered platform above the main village on the hillside. I hoist my backpack and the bag of camera equipment, wobbling across the series of single-plank and lashed bamboo bridges, but ready to start the discussion of the role photography can play when social media meets limited infrastructure.

Workshop 3

The final of the set of three workshops was held in Yaka Runa, a small community about an hour south of Puyo. This community is a collaborative effort on the part of four nationalities, Zapara, Achuar, Shuar and Shiwiar. Originally started as a pisciculture project, the community is built over a small river that runs alongside the Pastaza river, and causes them to build walkways to get from communal areas to private and sleeping areas. They are in the process of building accommodation for people to stay in the community as volunteers and if they are interested in learning about the community as an eco-tourism experience.

We arrived in the community quite early in the morning, and began the workshop immediately after dropping off our belongings. Beginning with an introduction much like the other workshops, we had a review of some of the concepts that had been used in the first workshop for the benefit of the participants from the community, as well as an introduction into more advanced techniques. We discussed the use of aperture and shutter speed to influence the appearance of light and time, looking at example photos that I had taken around Puyo. After looking at how these functions could be changed on the cameras, we spent the remainder of the morning taking photos, walking as a group to the next small community along the highway. This

time was unguided, and provided a chance for me to get to know the youth from the community, and to allow them a chance to become familiar with the cameras. After the lunch we again met to brainstorm themes that were important within the Indigenous movement as a whole, as well as some specific to their communities, talking about how these themes could then be demonstrated through photography. I asked each of the participants to choose a theme that they felt they would like to try to represent, and sent them out to take photographs for the rest of the afternoon. I downloaded the photos to allow us to view them the next day, and as the community does not have electricity everyone went to bed early.

After waking early for a guayusa ceremony and breakfast, we met to view the photos and have the participants share. After three of the core participant group and two of the community participants had shared, I asked each participant to choose one of the photos that they had taken and to write their short explanation. The themes that emerged during these activities will be discussed below in the outcomes section. We left the community around lunchtime to return to Puyo by bus.

Figure 7.7. Participants writing descriptions of their photos, photo by author.

Exposition

The situation changed quickly during this phase of the research, with modifications to the schedule occurring on an almost daily basis as CONFENIAE enacted other aspects of their larger communication strategy and carried out additional events to support the organization's goals. The *Marcha por un Dialogo con Resultados*, discussed in the following chapter, is one example of how the quickly changing situation altered my own research plans. The *Marcha* was planned very quickly to occur on short notice, meaning that my loose plans for additional workshops had to be flexed to take these factors into account. After the three workshops were completed, Andrés Tapía and I organized an exhibition of the photos that the main participants had taken during the workshops, to be held on November 25, 2017, two days before the beginning of the *Marcha*. It was important that this final event be completed before the beginning of the *Marcha*, as some of the core participant group had been asked to act as part of the photography team for the event and would be unavailable during the two weeks that the *Marcha* was scheduled to last. The exposition was intended as a public acknowledgement of the commitment that the core group of youth had shown in participating in the entire series of workshops.

We held the exposition in a local bar that was frequently associated with art in Puyo, and was friendly to the Indigenous movement. Each of the participants was asked to choose five of their photos that they liked the most, with photos being chosen for the participants who were not available to choose themselves. All of the photos were printed, and I met with Andrés and a couple of the other participants an hour before the event to hang them around the bar. I hadn't known exactly what method would work best to display the photos since there was no walls large enough in the bar, so I ended up buying some yarn and clothes pins at the local market. We careful created a web of yarn around the bar, trying not to block anywhere people would need to walk and keeping them high enough for the photos to be at eye level. As we hung the final images Andrés brought me a beer and we clinked our bottles in celebration.

Figure 7.8. Members of CONFENIAE viewing the exposition, photo by author.

As the participants began to file in their eyes lit up and they greeted one another in excited tones, with the participants who had helped set up pointing out their favorites to each newcomer. Their pride was palpable as community and organization members began to arrive. Participants spent the evening discussing their photos with each other, as well as with other members of CONFENIAE who came to the celebration. Towards the end of the night, Andrés and I both said a few words of congratulations and thanks to the participants and the CONFENIAE directors who had come, and presented each of the participants with a certificate acknowledging their completion of the series of workshops. Participants were allowed to take home any of their own

photos that they wished, as well as any from the other participants that they had not wanted, providing them with some tangible evidence of their experience.

Figure 7.9. Certificate presented to the core participants in recognition of their workshop participation.

Following the completion of the workshops and exhibition with the core participant group, we began to organize three workshops in the home communities of core participants. The first two of these were easily organized, and represent the diversity of communities with an interest in visual representation. The third of this series of workshops never occurred, due to scheduling challenges that will be discussed towards the end of the chapter. Following each of the community workshops, one of the cameras purchased for the project was left with the local organization or nation to provide a means of using the skills they had acquired. The remaining

four cameras were left with CONFENIAE after the Marcha, and one of my personal cameras was donated to CONAIE as well before I left Ecuador.[141]

Community Workshop 1: Tiwintza

The first of these community workshops was held in Tiwintza, in the southern Amazonian region, and jointly organized with the Shuar Arutam. Tiwintza is a community with a complex history as a site historical wars between Ecuador and Peru.[142] Located near the border with Peru, as shown in the map in Figure 7.3, this community is also isolated from many of the infrastructural developments, though there is limited Internet access. The Shuar Arutam are already heavily involved in communication activities, focusing on the development of a community radio station, and having created a number of documentary films about their community. Participation was not high for this workshop unfortunately. Due to a combination of the *Marcha* and particularly rainy weather, there were only three participants present, the core participant whose community it was, Patricio, and two other community organizers. As we sat waiting in the community office with the rain pouring down outside the open door I asked Patricio whether he expected people to come soon. He shrugged, saying “hay lluvia.”[143] As the workshop was planned to be held in a single day, with travel on each side to allow me to make it to the next workshop in the north, there was not much flexibility to allow another attempt. While it was not possible in this case due to time constraints, flexibility in scheduling would have significantly increased the success of this series of workshops.

As all of the participants present were experienced with photography, and the weather would have damaged the equipment, we spent the majority of the workshop discussing advanced techniques, looking at camera settings, and talking about options for editing photos. This last topic was one I had not covered with participants previously, as many of them had only limited access to computers, so I instead emphasized taking photos that would be useful without

[141] These cameras have continued to be used by the *Lanceros Digitales* communication group who I will discuss in Chapter 8. This group creates a large amount of visual media for use on social media and the organizations’ websites.

[142] For further detail about this conflict, and the continuing disputes surrounding identity, territory and citizenship, please see Greene 2008.

[143] “It’s raining.”

alteration.[144] The Shuar Arutam offices had computers that the members were able to access for photo editing, and were interested in discussing their experiences, what they could improve, and some of the ethical considerations of when it was appropriate to edit a photo.[145] In the afternoon, as the weather cleared, Patricio took me on a tour of the community, including the radio station and we took a few photos before I caught a late bus back to Macas where I was staying the night.

Community Workshop 2: Tena

The second community workshop was held in Tena, a city with a population equivalent to Puyo's about an hour to the north, and was jointly offered with the *Nación Originaria Quijos* (NAOQUI). Nicolás had helped to organize this workshop, as he was an active youth organizer in NAOQUI, and the workshop drew a large amount of interest. Due to the size of the group, with 17 participants, the format for this workshop was a combination of that used during the joint workshop with El Churo and that used in the Yaka Runa. We focused on basic photographic principles during an introductory discussion, and brainstormed key themes before breaking into groups for the photography experience. Each group was again asked to focus on one key theme for their photography, and were given a camera to share. When groups returned, I downloaded their photos and sent them for a break. After lunch each group was asked to share one photo, providing a description of their theme and how the photo demonstrates that theme, as well as a brief overview of their general experience. This was another workshop that had some scheduling challenges, in this case delays because of miscommunication about timing, and it would have again benefitted from more flexibility in my own schedule to offer an additional day of training to anyone who was interested.

Workshop Outcomes

As shown in Table 1, there were a huge number of photos taken during the series of workshops, providing a massive number of photos for discussion. As outlined above, each workshop ran

[144] Discussions focusing on how to ensure that photos had proper lighting was one of the major topics that Andrés Tapía continually identified as important since he received a large number of photos that he was not able to use on social media because of their poor lighting. His goal for the workshops was to ensure that the participants were creating immediately usable media that he would not have to try to edit using the computers at CONFENIAE's headquarters.

[145] The most important factor in this decision seemed to be whether a photo was supposed to provide evidence of something that was happening in the community, and whether it needed to be "true" (personal interview with Patricio, November 29, 2017).

slightly differently, but the most focused were those that used brainstorming to identify key themes, and then asked participants to use those themes to focus their photography. These workshops tended to have the richest discussions about the themes, with detailed descriptions and some debate. Additionally, in some of the workshops each participant also provided a written explanation to accompany one chosen photo, which ensured that even individuals who may have been uncomfortable speaking about their photos were contributing their perspectives. The workshops generated dialogues that provide insight into the lives of youth participants by highlighting what is important to them through what they chose to photograph, discuss, and write about.

There were a few themes that emerged as relevant across the workshops, even in those that did not explicitly brainstorm these ideas before photos were taken. The first four of the themes were identified by the participants during the brainstorming sessions that formed a portion of the workshops, all of these themes emerged at least twice: Traditional Relationships to the Land and Indigenous Identity; Environmental Protection; Infrastructure and Development; and Subsistence Agriculture and Economy. The final theme, Urbanization and Globalization, was one that I identified from the discussions and the thematic grouping of a large number of photos that participants returned to when we were discussing their favorite images and which they found most compelling, but that they did not expand on verbally. While I provide some context and analysis for these images and the words of the participants, I largely let them speak for themselves. While my own interpretation is at times helpful for clarification, I prefer to provide my participants with a venue to share their own thoughts and perspectives with as little interference as possible.

Theme 1: Traditional Relationships to the Land and Indigenous Identity

Pride in Indigenous identity and traditions emerged repeatedly during the workshops as one of the key ideas that youth wanted to demonstrate through photographs. This took a variety of forms, but was often represented through images of traditional dress and adornments, handicrafts such as pottery, and traditional practices such as making chicha. For example, during the first workshop, one of the members of the core group of participants spent two hours during the afternoon displaying his traditional adornments in his home close to Unión Base, show in Figure

7.10. He was not the only one to demonstrate traditional dress, and the group of participants from Yaka Runa community also took the time to share the finely made detailing on traditional headdresses and jewelry. They find a connection of the material aspects of traditional culture to their specific Indigenous identities and importance of these items to demonstrating and maintaining their Indigenous cultures. The participant Diego described Figure 7.11, saying "This image represents cultural identity, each Amazonian nationality has a different way to show their cultural identity, different ways in relation to: art, dress, dance, handicrafts, gastronomy, language, religion and their way of life."[146]

Figure 7.10. Core participant Marco demonstrating his traditional dress, photo by Juan.

[146] "Esta imagen representa la identidad cultural, cada nacionalidad amazonica tiene diferente manera de demostrar su identidad cultural, en diferentes maneras atravez de: arte, vestimenta, danza, gastronomia, idioma, religion y su forma de vida." Diego, written commentary, Nov. 22, 2017

Figure 7.11. Traditional headpiece, photo by Diego.

Traditional practices were also frequently demonstrated in the images that were being taken, and again were a popular topic in the photos taken in the community of Yaka Runa. One participant from the community described Figure 7.12, of a woman preparing chicha, providing an explanation of the process for making the beverage before saying, "The grandmother provides this drink every day to all of the members of the family and visitors. In this way the grandmother shows women in the hierarchy."[147] This speaks to the traditional role of women in within many Indigenous cultures, but also the importance of passing on traditions in order to maintain continuity.[148] The social expectations for women are shifting in Ecuador as more opportunities

[147] "La abuela brinda esta bebida todos los dias a todos los integrantes de la familia y visitantes. Asi la abuela demuestra Gerarquia en los mujeres." Yaka Runa community member, written commentary [sic], Nov. 22, 2017

[148] As Yaka Runa is a mixed community comprised of more than one Indigenous nationality I am unable to say whether she was speaking about a specific nationality.

become available for education and employment, but there is still continuity of many traditional roles and these changes in many cases put a strain on these traditional knowledge bases.

Figure 7.12. Woman making chicha, photo by Yaka Runa community member.

The core group participant Maria highlighted this tension and described the maintenance of these traditions within Yaka Runa, “In Yaka Runa the cultures maintain their own identities to be clearly passed to the current youth so that they can always maintain our customs.”[149]

Beyond the maintenance of traditional culture and traditions, participants repeatedly took photos to demonstrate and described the importance of Indigenous resurgence and resistance. During the very first workshop, the participant Marco took Figure 7.13 of CONFENIAE’s headquarters, describing it this way, “CONFENIAE expands their fire, is born like fire, these days it is burning, expanding their fire in the Amazon and in the world.”[150] This powerful analysis spoke to the passion and optimism that involvement with CONFENIAE creates for young Indigenous people, giving them a sense that they can create real change throughout and beyond Ecuador.

[149] “En Yaka Runa se mantienen las culturas de su propio identidad para dejar bien claro a los jovenes actuals que mantengan siempre nuestras costumbres.” Maria, written commentary, Nov. 22, 2017

[150] “La confenia expande su fuego nace como fuego oi en dia esta quemando exparse su fuego en la amazonia y en el mundo.” Marco, written commentary[sic], Nov. 8, 2017

Figure 7.13. CONFENIAE headquarters with flames, photo by Marco.

Theme 2: Environmental Protection

A huge number of the photos taken by participants in all of the workshops were of the natural environment. Even when workshops were held in urban environments, such as that in Tena, participants tended to gravitate to the greenspaces in the city to take their photos. While many of the youth no longer live in traditional communities or on their traditional territories, they or their families having moved to cities, often for economic reasons. Many of the photos were quite simple, like Figures 7.14 to 7.16, and were given very little commentary beyond a basic statement of the importance of the natural world, and of having a relationship with the land.

Figure 7.14. Forested area in the Parque Amazónico La Isla, in the center of the Río Tena, photo by participant group 2 in Tena workshop.

Figure 7.15. Monkey in the Parque Amazónico La Isla, in the center of the Río Tena, photo by participant group 5 in Tena workshop.

Figure 7.16. Puyo River near Unión Base, photo by Nícolas.

A couple of the participants gave more complete descriptions of their relationships to the environment. One of the youth from Yaka Runa wrote this, "I perceive and I breathe the essence of the life, connected to the air, water, fire and earth, within my being, spiritual, mental and physical, it teaches me the importance of the decision of each person because we are born to change the planet from better to worse or from worse to better; from the point where we meet in the space of the earth, affecting or contributing to the universe in one way or another and in this way maintaining the equilibrium of the passage of time."[151] This description closely aligns with the understandings that I have been able to gain of the Indigenous understanding of *Sumak*

[151] "Persibo y respire de la esencia de la vida, conectado con el aire, agua, fuego y tierra, dentro de mi ser, spiritual, mental y fisico, me enzeña la importancia de la decisión de cada persona, por que nacímos para cambiar de major a peor o de peor a major, al planeta; desde el punto donde nos encontramos en el espacio de la tierra, afectando o contribuyendo de una u otra manera al universe y así mantenerlo en equilibro al transcurso del tiempo." Yaka Runa community member, written commentary [sic], Nov. 22, 2017

Kawsay and the relationship between humans and Pachamama (Coral-Guerrero, García-Quero and Guardiola 2021). *Sumak Kawsay* is also one of the core underpinnings of the organizations and plays a role in territorial claims as the it interacts with the wider political ideals of *Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir* as it is articulated in the Ecuadorian constitution.[152]

Jesús, one of the core participants, gave a similarly strong description of his relationship to the natural world, describing the mushrooms pictured in Figure 7.17 as a set of eyes watching you and writing, "The photo shows that the forest always watches you although you do not realize it, in the end nature watches you while you destroy it and you end it all, nature speaks to you in a very clear mute language so that you can understand it and live in harmony with everything that surrounds you, animals, birds, trees, rivers, mountains, etc. etc. We live in harmony with nature."[153]

[152] For further information on this relationship, please see Chapter 2.

[153] "La foto describe que la selva te observa de todas formas aunque tu no te des cuenta, a final de cuentas la naturaleza te observa mientras tu la destruyes y acabas con todo, la naturaleza te habla en un lenguaje mudo muy claro para que lo entiendas y vivas en armonía con todo lo que te rodea, animales, aves, árboles, rios, montañas, etc. etc. vivamos en armonía con la naturaleza." Jesús, written description [sic], Nov. 8, 2017

Figure 7.17. Mushrooms growing near Unión Base, photo be Jesús.

The destruction of the environment and the protection that it should be given were also prevalent topics for discussion. Many of the participants took photos of litter in the streets or around the landscape, as is shown in Figures 7.18 and 7.19. These images were much more common when the workshops were held in urban environments, and focused mostly on the contamination of single use plastics associated with a global consumer market. These are items that, while the youth do sometimes consume them, represent a way of life that they know to be destructive to their territories and that they know are problematic practices. These are also practices which highlight an economic disparity, as the majority of these single use plastics come from the consumption of people from outside of their communities, particularly tourists who are often international travellers.

Figure 7.18. Litter around Unión Base’s buildings, photo by Patricio.

Figure 7.19. Litter in the street in Tena, photo by participant group 1 in Tena workshop.

Mateo highlight this disparity between the local communities and tourists in his description of a similar photo, Figure 7.20 taken near Unión Base, saying, “We need more care on the part of the authorities, so that people do not throw garbage in the rivers. Because the Puyo River is a river with a tourism walk. And we, the residents, want a change and an environment without contamination.”

Figure 7.20. Litter in the Puyo River, photo by Mateo.

Exploitation of the jungle was also a common theme, particularly in the community of Yaka Runa. The surrounding area is undergoing a large amount of logging, and Jesús described the process as clear cutting, despite the fact that not all of the timber is desirable and is only cut to make the extraction easier for the loggers. These extractive processes demonstrate the intersection of a range of issues that the participants confront, including the damage being done to the immediate environment and their local communities, the financial impact of extractive processes that reinforce economic disparities between the center and Amazonia, and the wider issues of deforestation taking place throughout the region. At its core though, these issues link back to the same perspective on relationships between humans and their environment.

Figure 7.21. Logged area outside of the Yaka Runa community, photo by Jesús.

One of the Yaka Runa community members described the destruction of the logging process, saying "In these times of exploitation of the wood from the Amazonian jungle they continue to destroy the environment and they do not realize that we breathe oxygen thanks to the trees despite the pollution of the industries, the communities and cultures of the amazon continue to conserve the jungle to obtain oxygen in the world. If you plant a seed, you plant life."[154]

Despite the prevalence of oil and gas industries in the Amazon, and the huge role that resistance to oil and gas companies plays in the Indigenous movement in Ecuador, that form of extraction and exploitation did not emerge as a significant topic. This is an interesting omission, and one which I speculate was largely impacted by the locations of the workshops. With the exception of Tiwintza, which is further south than most of the oil and gas extraction, all of the cities and

[154] "En estos tiempos la explotación de la madera en la selva amazonica sigue destruyendo el ambiente y no se dan cuenta que por arboles respiramos aun el oxígeno a pesar de la contaminación de las industrias, los pueblos y culturas de la amzonía siguen conservando la selva para obtener oxígeno en el mundo, si siembras una semilla, siembras vida." Yaka Runa community member, written commentary [sic], Nov. 22, 2017

communities I was in are located on the very edge of the Amazon where extractive industries do not have as direct an impact on their daily lives. Were I to hold workshops further into the jungle in the future the results may be different.

Theme 3: Infrastructure and Development

The theme of infrastructure and development came up fairly often in relation to the CONFENIAE headquarters in Unión Base, outside of the city center of Puyo. The historic site of the organization, this complex of wooden buildings had been abandoned for a number of years in favor of offices within the city, due largely to the cost of maintaining the structures (interview with Andrés Tapía, Oct. 23, 2017), however they had returned to the site in recent years and have been in the process of gradually rehabilitating the buildings. The need to improve basic facilities like the bathrooms was mentioned by three separate participants. A number of conversations also revolved around the need for Internet at the headquarters, which was not available at the time, but was being considered via a satellite system.

Discussing the most damaged of the buildings shown in Figure 7.22, Patricio wrote, "For many years the headquarters of CONFENIAE was abandoned and there was no concern with maintaining the building, the leaders at the time did not choose to have or construct a new building to improve our lives in Unión Base."[155] Participants returned to this building again and again when taking photographs around Unión Base, and referred to it frequently when looking for an example of needing to improve CONFENIAE's infrastructure.

[155] "A se mucho años abandonados la sede de CONFENAEI no habido mayor precupación de dar mantenimiento el edificio, los dirigentes del turno no se tomaron tener o construir un nuevo edificio para mejorar nuevas viviendas en Union Base." Patricio, written commentary [sic], Nov. 8, 2017

Figure 7.22. Damaged building at CONFENIAE's headquarters in Unión Base, photo by Nícolas.

Participants also chose to photograph positive images of infrastructure and development in their communities. During workshops around Unión Base, youth took many photos of recently installed powerlines, bridges, and signs describing a water monitoring program. They also took many photos of the community's school building, later describing the benefit of having education available within the community. The goal of bi-lingual education in Indigenous languages, and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into curriculum is one of CONAIE's

ongoing goals, and one which contributes to the resurgence and continuity of Indigenous cultures. Maintaining schools within communities like Unión Base, rather than sending children into a larger city like Puyo, is a positive step towards these goals.

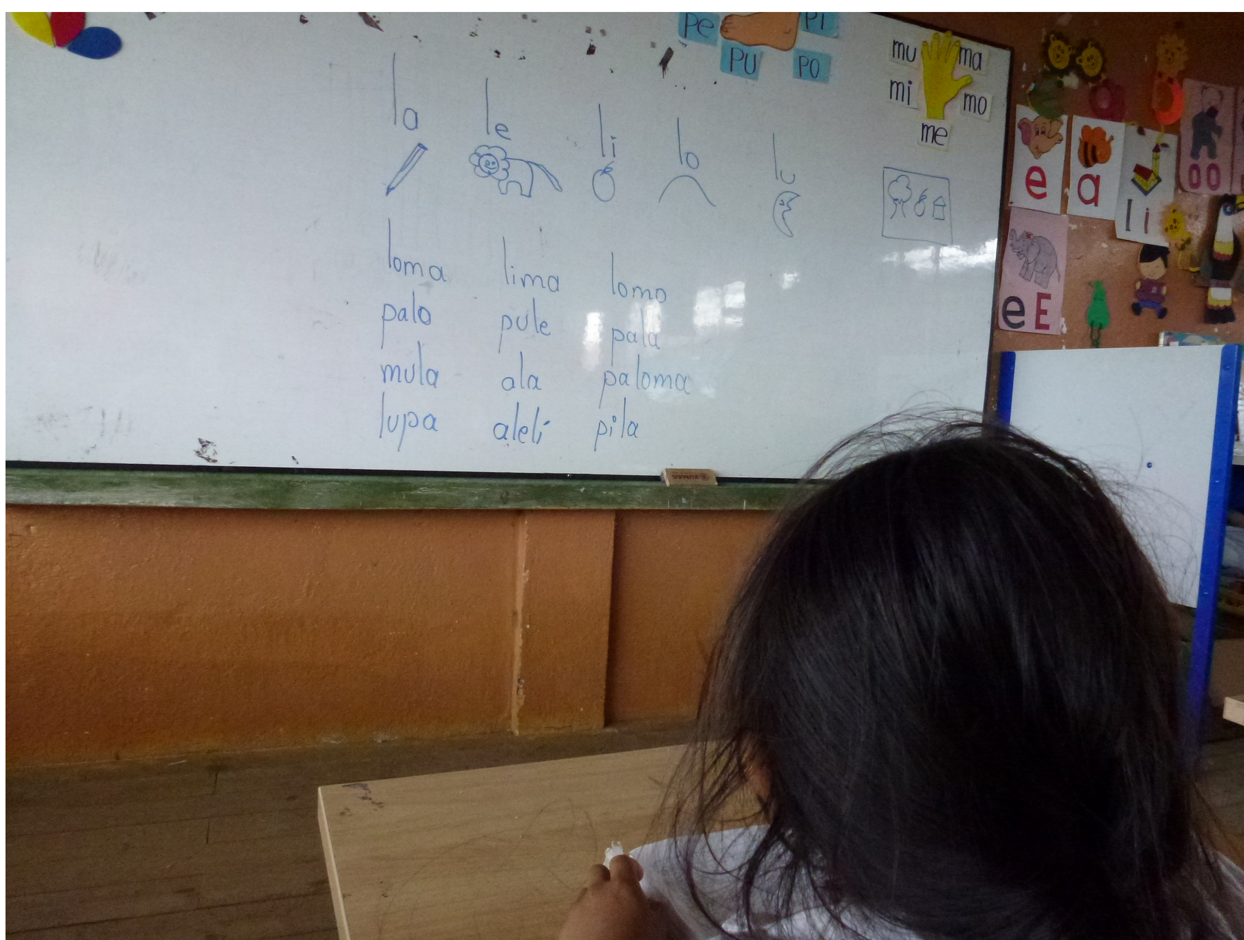

Figure 7.23. Schoolroom in Unión Base, photo by Juan.

Another example of a community-based development project, Figure 7.24 shows the community radio building in Tiwintza, which provides information for a large number of people who do not have access to Internet within the southern Amazonian region. This is just one of a large number of community radio projects being developed, providing a voice for Indigenous peoples within their own communities. These projects, as was discussed in Chapter 6, also face a number of challenges, which leads to understandable satisfaction in relation to those that are successful.

Figure 7.24. Building that houses the local Tiwintza radio station run by the Pueblo Shuar Arutam and largely managed by youth from the community, photo by Patricio.

Theme 4: Subsistence Agriculture and Economy

Economy was a less common theme for participants to choose to discuss or write descriptions of, however they chose to take a large number of photos of edible plants, both intentionally cultivated and growing wild. Locally grown plant life like these comprise an important component of traditional Indigenous diets, and present another connection to the goals of maintaining Indigenous lifestyles.

Figure 7.25. Passionfruit (Granadillas) ripening on a tree, photo by Diego.

Figure 7.26. Papaya ripening on a tree, photo by Diego.

Mateo described the importance of these images, saying that communities needed to focus on agriculture since "they have land to cultivate, so it is important to develop it to support the communities."[156] Youth from the community of Yaka Runa agreed, but stated that "we need to

[156] "Tienen tierra para cultivar, entonces es importante desarollarla para apoyar a las comunidades." Mateo, interview, Nov. 22, 2017

change the economy and stop monoculture."[157] This is a belief being enacted within their community, as they produce a wide range of items in addition to the fish that their community's economy was originally based on. Issues of land use and tenure are extremely important within Indigenous communities, as loss of land, such as if it is sold to someone who is not a member of their Indigenous nationality contributes to fragmentation of Indigenous lands and makes broader territorial claims more difficult.[158]

The other element of economy frequently photographed, particularly within larger cities, is handicrafts for sale. Figure 7.27 shows one example of this kind of photo, and represents a common way for Indigenous people to earn money. One of the core participants families were involved in this trade within Puyo, selling in one of a group of booths in the tourist area of the city. Participants were proud of the skill involved in this form of artwork, often showing the fine details in a piece that they were wearing. They also acknowledged the way that this tied them into the wider national economy, as a portion of their income was then reliant on tourism within the region.

[157] "necesitamos cambiar la economía y para la monocultura." Yaka Runa community member, Nov. 22, 2017.

[158] A discussion of this was a prominent topic of debate during the *Consejo Amplio de* CONFENIAE on November 20, 2017.

Figure 7.27. Jewelry for sale in Puyo, photo by Group 5 from the joint workshop with El Churo.

Theme 5: Urbanization and Globalization

The final type of image that repeatedly emerged was also not discussed verbally by the participants, but appeared throughout all of the workshops. This represented the daily lives of participants, and particularly elements of life that reflected their identities as youth in a global and increasingly urban world. Participants photographed each other at a rate second only to that of the natural environment, often choosing to show clothing like baseball caps or brand, tattoos,

and activities that were distinctly urban. A few of the core participants were avid fans of hip hop music, were working on producing their own music, and dressed in a style that reflected an urban hip hop culture. They described a series of photos as reflecting their identities as musicians.

Figure 7.28. An example of a tattoo on a Yaka Runa community member's back, photo by Yaka Runa community member.

Most of the prevalent themes in the photography of the youth aligned closely with the interests and desires of the organization as a whole, which emphasizes traditional Indigenous identity in their public communications. Urbanization is the only theme that is not explicitly discussed or developed by CONFENIAE in their own media representations, but it is important to note that the participants have effectively woven these aspects of their identities together, representing themselves and their perspectives unapologetically. While the organizations engage in globalization through their relationships with other Indigenous organizations, their involvement in international organizations like the United Nations, and their interactions with governments and corporations involved in Indigenous territories.

Benefits of Photovoice Workshops

Developing Youth Skills

Photography had an instant appeal to the Communication Directors of both CONAIE and CONFENAIE, as it offered an opportunity to improve useful skills for the youth within the organizations. As has been discussed before, communication practices are actively being developed by both organizations, with a large number of events and workshops focusing on implementing different types of communication and developing specific skills to improve those communication methods. The photography workshops fit well into this existing framework, especially within CONFENIAE, which generally has high levels of participation in all of their workshops.

Visual communication is prevalent among both organizations, as they rely strongly on social media for communication both with their members, and with supporters internal and external to Ecuador. Many of the members of CONAIE and CONFENIAE post images online, often using mobile technologies, associating them with the organizations through hashtags and tagging the organizations. While this communication can be beneficial, the Communication Directors of CONAIE and CONFENIAE have found that poor quality images may also reflect poorly on the organizations, creating a vested interest in the organizations improving the communication potential of their members. The strong focus on image quality in these workshops is not common practice in photovoice. Arjun Shankar (2016) has effectively criticized the limited view inherent in many photovoice projects which regards the images as descriptive of circumstances

rather than as expressing aesthetic and artistic perspectives particular to individual participants. These workshops focused heavily on the aesthetic aspects of photography, with many participants who had previous experience taking photos and explicitly asking participants to frame complex shots to represent abstract concepts. Given the widespread use of photography, photovoice is increasingly unlikely to present a new mode of representation, but rather taps into familiar practices of participants' lives. This new prevalence of photography also means that many people have developed specific photography styles of their own. Many of the participants with previous photography experience were particularly interested in aesthetics and symbolic representations, as can be seen in Figure 7.13 above, which was very carefully composed. While the comments from some participants may have been solely about the subjects depicted, actively investigating the photographers' potential artistic considerations can broaden insights gained from photovoice projects and should be given greater consideration. In addition, it is important to reflect whose aesthetic values are given weight and what power inequalities this may perpetuate. The instruction offered during these workshops, for example, was influenced by national and international standards that may have differed from Indigenous people's aesthetic.

Skill development was also important to the youth on an individual level. For the core group, receiving their certificates during the photo exhibition was a significant moment. Having a physical representation of their success was important to the participants, and provided them with evidence of the skills they had acquired – which may open up future opportunities for them, as it demonstrates their interest in developing their communication skills.

Rapport and Research Opportunities

My photovoice workshops were originally conceived and planned as a small portion of the research project, intended to complement the larger research project and to offer some support to the organizations as they contributed to my data collection. In the end, these workshops became a major focus of the research project, providing opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the political goals of CONFENIAE as they were articulated by their members. Photovoice typically relies on in-depth discussions of the photographs taken by the participants. The focus of these workshops on improving photography skills meant that the participants were more focused

on the quality of images that they were producing than on the messages that were being communicated, though they still tended to highlight topics that held value for them.

The rapport that developed through this series of workshops existed on two separate levels: that with the organizations, and that with the individual participants. Each of these reflects a different type of relationship and development of trust. CONFENIAE has a long tradition of involvement with researchers, which contributed to the Communication Director's willingness to buy into the project early. After beginning the series of workshops, opportunities arose to become increasingly involved with the organization, including participating in the *Encuentro Nacional de la Comunicación Comunitaria*, *los Consejos Amplios*, as well as the *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados*, the last of which occurred at the beginning of December 2017. CONAIE and CONFENIAE are closely connected organizations, often collaborating on events and drawing support from one another. As the research continued and involvement with CONFENIAE grew, I was able to develop greater rapport with the Communication Director of CONAIE, Apawki Castro, as well.

Relationships with individual participants began to develop based on this initial involvement with the organizations. Beginning to offer the workshops in conjunction with the organizations demonstrated a level of trust that existed between the organizations and myself as an individual researcher, essentially providing legitimacy for the research project. Holding these workshops also provided an opportunity to meet youth in a situation that offered them a benefit. Many of the participants in the photovoice workshops would not have been interested in talking to a researcher without an initial introduction or the legitimacy granted through association with the organizations.

Trust and camaraderie already existed among many of the participants in the photovoice workshops when I began my research. Some of the youth had been involved in other events coordinated by their communities or the organizations, and even when that was not the case, many of the youth had previous experiences working with the Communication Director, Andrés Tapía, who helped to organize the workshops. By offering a series of workshops, I was able to become increasingly familiar with the participants, developing trust as I built long term

relationships with the youth.[159] This rapport was demonstrably stronger with youth who participated in multiple workshops, with a greater likelihood of conversation and continuing communication outside of the workshops, such as over social media.

The relationship that developed between myself and the core group helped to improve the research process, creating a much larger amount of data than would have been if each workshop had different participants. Often new participants would be hesitant to voice opinions on what was important to their communities or to describe the photos that they had taken, in which case one of the core group would provide the first idea and break the ice. The presence of the core group in later workshops helped to reduce tension between myself as a researcher and the new participants, especially with the necessity of obtaining informed consent before beginning each workshop, a process that could sometimes make participants feel intimidated or exacerbate the power differential. The written aspect also helped to mitigate the hesitancy to share, as participants were more willing to allow me to read what they had written than to discuss it aloud.

The development of rapport with the core group also allowed me to gain deeper insight into their perspectives. Initially the photos they were taking tended to focus on positive themes, including many taken at a local school, or those demonstrating traditional dress and pride in traditional culture. For example, during the second day of the first workshop, Marco gave a verbal description of Photo 8 as demonstrating the passion and drive that CONFENIAE's members have for defending their lifestyle and communities. Over time discussions also began to include comments on environmental degradation and conflicts with the government and multinationals. Members of organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE are often careful of voicing criticism to outsiders in Ecuador, so my association with the organizations helped to break down some barriers that may have limited the information I could have collected independently. This relationship may, however, have had some impact on the information that I did collect. By being associated with the organizations, the perspectives that the participants were willing to share with me may have been limited as they attempted to respond to the needs and goals of the organizations.

[159] I worked with the same group of youth over the course of three months, but our relationship hasn't ended with the end of my time in Ecuador since we have maintained contact over social media since I returned to Canada.

Empowerment of Young People

One of the main purposes of photovoice is frequently cited to be empowerment of participants, as it is often used in situations where participants do not have opportunities for direct representation (Photovoice 2020). The workshops offered with CONFENIAE reflect this situation to some extent, but not completely. While the potential for empowerment was high due to the fact that the workshops targeted youth (under 25 years old) within the organizations – a population less likely to be involved in communication practices within the organizations, they also took place as part of a much wider communication strategy already enacted by CONFENIAE to bolster the skills and involvement of young organization members. The opportunity to improve skills and create media that were useful for the organizations provided young people with greater involvement, and helped to increase their overall influence within the organizations. Some of the participants who were involved in the series of workshops continued their involvement with communication activities after the workshops were over, becoming frequent photographers during events held by the organizations. For example, a few of the participants became involved in the *Lanceros Digitales* communication group during the *Marcha*, to be discussed further in the following chapter. Those who continued to be heavily involved in the communication activities of the organizations, however, were in many cases the youth who were already interested in communication practices. For example, two of the participants had their own cameras, which they had already been using regularly. The workshops offered strengthening opportunities for these skills. For those who were not interested beforehand, the workshops offered an entertaining introduction to new skills, but did not necessarily have a continuing impact on their lives. Much of the empowerment resulting from these workshops is occurring at the individual level in this situation, allowing individuals opportunities that they may not have experienced without their participation in the workshops. While photovoice is often touted as a way in which to empower participants, claims that this is going to be a guaranteed outcome should be viewed with scepticism (Johnston 2016).

Young people were empowered as a general group through these workshops as well, providing a stronger voice within the organization. Individual youth who became media creators had a greater tendency to involve other young people in ongoing communication practices, creating

materials that share their perspectives at a much higher rate than older media creators. Participants were also willing to put their photographs and other media onto social media websites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As Facebook is one of the main methods for communication with both CONAIE and CONFENIAE, which provides an avenue for them to communicate with people external to the organizations without the control of traditional media. Participants are likely to share things which are not being posted on the official organization website, often resharing photos and memes about the organizations or focusing on more general political content.

There are clear limitations to the empowerment that occurred through these workshops, most notably in the involvement of women within the workshops and within communication as a whole. According to Mosedale, empowerment of women needs to be occurring on a collective rather than individual level, allowing more opportunities for the entire gender (2005, 252). This argument is strongly reflected within communication, where challenges to participation by women have been noted by scholars among movements such as that of the Zapatistas in Mexico (Belausteguigoitia 2006, 106). Women are typically responsible for a higher proportion of household labour than men, causing them to have less opportunity to learn and utilize communication skills. While both CONAIE and CONFENIAE are explicit in their desire to support women's greater involvement in the organizations, these are cultural barriers that are not often discussed. Though many young women participated in the photovoice workshops, they would often leave part way through to prepare meals or care for children. Only a couple of young women were able to participate in more than one workshop, neither of whom lived outside of a major city or had children of their own, factors that have an impact on their ability to participate as their daily obligations are different. The participation of these couple of women should not therefore stand as evidence of the empowerment of the organization's female members in general.

Workshop Challenges

One of the main challenges faced was in basic organization and planning. This challenge began during my first research trip, during which it became evident that despite general interest in the workshops, getting them scheduled required persistence and in the end they simply did not

happen. By relying on the organizations so heavily, I was placing a burden on the directors to find a schedule that worked for participants and the organization. As they did not have an established group of youth that they could turn to for participants, the need to recruit made the planning too demanding for the workshops to be successful. Likewise, finding a group of participants myself was a daunting prospect in Quito, as there was no central location where I would be able to introduce myself to prospective participants – CONAIE's headquarters was a building designed for meetings and offices rather than a place where an outsider would be able to casually meet organization members.

Scheduling the workshops was much easier in Puyo for a variety of reasons. First, CONFENIAE's base is located in a small and very actively involved community, which provided a much more accessible pool of potential participants. Second, despite being busy, Andrés Tapía was often in Puyo and able to meet on short notice, often incorporating meetings into social activities. Finalizing the dates could still be difficult. While I was often able to finalize a potential date with the organizations, they were not as easy to coordinate with the local communities where workshops would be held. Many of the communities have limited communication – a lack of Internet, and sometimes even mobile phone service. The third of the community workshops was never able to be carried out because the core participant who lived there wasn't able to receive my messages asking for a date when I should schedule my arrival for the first leg of the journey to the community. As the final distance to the community has to be by canoe, I wasn't confident enough to attempt the trip without confirmation.

Individuals also experienced challenges to participation. Often youth would be able to participate during one workshop, but would be unable to attend future workshops. Two main issues seemed to be responsible for this, first was the distance that many of them had to travel in order to participate. If they lived outside of the city, they would need to set aside sufficient travel time in addition to their participation. Often youth who lived longer distances from where workshops were offered also experienced the major challenge of greater financial costs of participation. Youth who lived distantly from the locations of the workshops sometimes could not afford the expense of travel, and even if they could, travel options to cities where the workshops were located can be limited and take a long time, often youth were forced to stay over in order to

participate. Staying in a city incurs additional expense for room and board, as well as potential loss from time away from income generating activities. Thus, one of the main issues related to these workshops was the lack of financial support. While the grant that I received from the CfYS meant that I was able to buy equipment to carry out the workshops, there was no money to provide assistance for transportation, lodging, or food during the workshops. The increased importance placed on these workshops and their increasing importance during the second research trip meant that the support ended up being insufficient.

Conclusions

This series of workshops was part of the larger effort on the part of CONAIE and CONFENIAE to include a greater range of people in the representation of the organizations. Both organizations were particularly interested in including more youth in their representational practices, a trend that was evident both in the statements of the Communication Directors, and through the design of their training opportunities. The events discussed in both the last chapter and these workshops stand as examples of this inclusive interest. CONFENIAE in particular made a point of involving youth from as many communities as they were able to, often supporting those participants with food and lodging while they were at the organization headquarters of Unión Base. Both organizations still have work to do for better incorporating the voices of women, as young women participating in the workshops pointed out. Efforts are being made to create a more inclusive environment, as more recent workshops and events have a greater focus on women's voices.

These efforts to include a wider range of organizational members' voices highlights CONAIE and CONFENIAE's focus on diffuse representation and minimizing the hierarchy that places control of representation solely in the hands of organizational leaders. The intention of involving a greater range of members in the communicative process reflects changing resources and technologies available to the organizations, in particular the increasing prevalence and access to Web 2.0 technologies and social media platforms. As increasing numbers of organizational members carry smartphones with cameras and social media connectivity, there is a parallel increase in the number of social media posts being made during events, resulting in a democratization of the representation of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. The workshops

emphasized a tension between the desire for the organizations to control the way that representation is taking place, including the type and quality of photographs that they were associated with, alongside an acknowledgment that representation no longer rests in the hands of an official group of people. This seemed to be a transition that had been taking place within both organizations over a few years, with the gradual increase in training opportunities for community communication and increased prevalence of social media use among organization members.

Chapter 8 : La Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados

Figure 8.1. Photo of the La Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados participants resting beside the highway. Photo by author.

"¡Sí! ¡Sí! ¡Aquí, por favor!"[160] *I yelled at the bus driver as we careened down the highway heading out of Quito. Everyone had been confused when I asked for a ticket heading to somewhere between Lasso and Machachi, the only way I had to describe the possible location of the marchers making their way towards the capital. Andrés Tapía, CONFENIAE's Communications Director had been keeping my apprised of the March's location via WhatsApp, and I was finally going to meet them for a day of walking. Once I managed to buy the ticket, I had to repeat the spectacle with the bus driver, trying to explain why I needed to be dropped at the edge of the highway as other passengers pushed past me to take seats.*

[160] "Yes! Yes! Here please!"

Everyone seemed to know by this point that I was looking for the march, and as we neared the spot where they sat for a break on the opposite side of the highway, the pointing and calls of "Allá están"[161] came from up and down the bus. Despite repeated attempts to explain my research and why I thought this was important, though, none of them seemed to understand why the gringa was looking for the march. As the bus drew up to the side of the highway, I scrambled to gather my bag and balance my way to the front. As the bus pulled away with all of the passengers waving, I checked for oncoming traffic and darted across the four lanes of the highway. As I first walked up to the marchers, I felt surrounded by a sea of strange faces, and the flapping of the rainbow flags and banners that represent the Indigenous movement in South America. I shied away from the police officers at the edges of the group, sent by the government to prevent conflicts as the march moved across the country. It didn't take long to bump into some of the youths who had been participating in communication workshops with me, exchanging shouts of greeting as the few hundred demonstrators packed away snacks that they had been sharing and rose to their feet to continue the march.

The *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados,* which took place from November 27 to December 11, 2017, presented a united face of the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador in contradiction to government actions. Beginning in Unión Base, near Puyo on the edge of the Amazon, the march ended in the Plaza Grande of Quito, just outside the seat of government. The march was dedicated to opening discussions between Indigenous organizations and the government around issues that had been ignored by Rafael Correa, the previous president.[162]

This march, marking the end of my research in December or 2017, is a perfect example of the way in which online communication aims to ignite large-scale actions in support of social movements. The online communication spread by the organizations before and during the march encouraged a much larger number of participants to attend the final stage of the march occurring in Quito,[163] and the physical presence of so many supporters also created a situation in which mainstream media, such as the newspapers, paid attention to the demands and actions of

[161] "There they are."

[162] See the full list of demands as they were posted online in Appendix B.

[163] Estimates put the participation around 10,000 when the march arrived in Quito.

Indigenous peoples. Considering this final event as an opportunity to utilize network forms to exploit a point of rupture in other established forms, I consider the march in the context of both a break, as well as a continuation of forms that are deeply entrenched in the structures of the organizations.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the way that events like marches fit within a larger communication strategy, the concept of "the public," the power of events as "spectacles," and the benefits and drawbacks to using such events in rights-based movements. Next, I will provide a brief history of marches and similar events in a Latin American context, and more specifically within the context of Ecuador. Finally, I will provide the detailed example of the *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados,* analyzing the choices and impacts of the march within CONAIE and CONFENIAE's larger communication structure.

Physical Protest – Using and Forcing Communication

Marches and in-person protests have since the Arab Spring, become reliant on online communications, with online and offline communication practices interwoven for the success of a movement. Online communication can have a range of implications for offline protesting, such as the level of visibility the event receives in the mainstream media, how broad a range of support networks that can be mobilized during the event, or the level of support that the public provides for the movement's demands.

Dan Mercea's three-year quantitative study showed that online communication can greatly impact participation in offline protest events, but that the impacts of this communication are also influenced by the riskiness of the event and the affiliation of the participants (2012). In the case of higher risk protests, where there is an anticipation of danger through violence or confrontation, individuals more closely affiliated with the organizations involved in a protest are more likely to seek out communication about the event online, whereas lower risk protests will draw interest online from a broader range of individuals (Mercea 2012). In the case of events planned by Indigenous organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE this implies that explicitly peaceful marches like the one that is the main focus of this chapter will be more likely to receive attention and participation from support networks, while more aggressive actions such as those

taken against extractive companies in the Amazon may be less likely to receive broad participation.[164]

The Role of a "Public" in Defining Protest

The choices made by an organization of the way they represent themselves during events, including whether an event is peaceful or aggressive, are thought to have an impact on the way that it is seen and understood by society as a collective whole, referred to as "the public." This idea of a universal national collective, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries with the development of Habermas' "public sphere" through the creation of a society focused on the good of all members by utilizing rational debate (Garnham 1990). The mass media was viewed as playing a vital role in the creation of this unified whole by providing unbiased sources of information for public opinion to be formed, though that information has always been filtered and spun based on the goals of the media outlets (Jacobs and Townsley 2011). The creation of a "public" has historically assumed the creation of a shared national identity, however, we increasingly see a multiplicity of overlapping and connected identities where various publics are formed through networking, effectively functioning as micro-publics (Keane 1995). As already discussed in Chapter 6, Nancy Fraser presented a similar critique of the idea of a unified public identity, utilizing the term subaltern counter-publics to highlight the creation of alternative publics by "subordinate social groups" who could then "invent and circulate counterdiscourses" (1990, 67). The use of new ICTs and interactive Web 2.0 technologies have allowed further fragmenting of this idea of "the public," allowing for increasing interactions among geographically dispersed groups with shared interests, though success in creating unified groups from these interactions is widely debated (Papacharissi 2002; Coleman and Ross 2010). Regardless of whether a unified "public" exists or not, the belief in such a shared identity shapes the actions of organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE, including their design of events like that discussed below.

The Power and Benefits of Spectacle

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[164] While lower participation may not necessarily indicate less effective action within the Amazonian context, it does help to conceptualize the different levels of participation.

George Yúdice (2003) uses the term "spectacle" to describe events intentionally designed to garner the attention of support networks, mass media outlets, and the power organizers are trying to contest, be that a government, organization, or corporation. Spectacles are large-scale, out of the ordinary, and explicitly seek to garner broad attention (Chavez 2013). Marches and uprisings are examples of events during which a sense of "spectacle" as defined by Yúdice can take place and that may utilize specific visual aesthetics to increase that attention. Often spectacle can be enhanced through visual aesthetics, for example, the Brazilian *Movimento dos Sem Terra* (Movement of the Landless, MST) wear bright red scarves during marches to demonstrate their participation. Spectacles can draw additional support through the physical presence that they create, encouraging the participation of broader networks and building solidarity. At the same time, spectacles make that solidarity visible to the public. One of the benefits of spectacle as a method for raising visibility is the maneuverability it provides, allowing organizations to respond to quickly changing circumstances and to catch those they are in dispute with off-guard (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). Audra Simpson points out that spectacles in settler societies "continue to redirect emotions, histories and possibilities away from the means of societal and historical production—Indigenous dispossession, disenfranchisement and dispossession" (2011, 207), but within Latin America they have been effectively harnessed by Indigenous organizations to counter hegemonic power structures.

The idea of spectacle reflects the importance of the visibility of the issue, utilizing all of the communication platforms that have been discussed in the previous chapters to effectively push an organization's agenda and then leverage that visibility to create additional impact with individual bodies physically asserting their rights during marches, uprisings or other organized events. Broad-based objectives associated with a spectacle can also emphasize the shared goals and interests of a support network, such as a focus on environmental protection. These shared interests help to increase solidarity among the participants (Yúdice 2003). During an event, people who would otherwise act as bystanders may also be drawn into participating in a spectacle (Strauss 2018).

Marches and uprisings are a common option for peoples needing to contest their treatment by state actors. Many examples exist, such as the Arab Spring protests from 2010-2012, the

international Occupy demonstrations from 2011-2012, the Spanish *Indignados*[165] movement from 2011-2015, and the Hong Kong pro-democracy Umbrella Movement of 2014, all of which utilized online communication to advertise, organize, and coordinate their protests (Adi 2015; Postill 2014; Tufekci 2017; Ma and Cheng 2019). Large events such as these bring awareness to issues by focusing the public's gaze on potentially invisible situations. For the state, it may be preferable to maintain media silence on contentious issues, attempting to keep them out of the public eye. Protesters can force the government to confront these issues in a public forum. The goal of the march that will be described later in this chapter provides a perfect example of the use of spectacle, since the explicitly stated reason for the creation of the march was to push the government to open dialogue with the Indigenous organizations. A lack of dialogue is not an issue that is apparent to the public, and would not be a dramatic news story, but a march involving Indigenous organizations and their support networks from around the country all converging on the capital was a very dramatic event.

Drawbacks of Spectacle

Holding an event such as a large-scale march is not a guarantee of successful communication with the public, however, and despite the potential benefits of wider public knowledge of a movement's demands and needs, there are inherent dangers in the practice as well. There are the potential physical and emotional costs of a large-scale protest, during which participants can be hurt, traumatized or even killed in extreme circumstances. Protestors and marchers can also be cast in the role of aggressors by the mainstream media, with any misbehaviour of marchers used to demonstrate the violence of the whole. For example, any clashes between the military or police and marchers can be used to cast doubt on protestors' actions, regardless of who initiated the conflict.[166]

Spectacles such as marches and uprisings are also not intended to solve problems, a limitation that may make them seem ineffectual to the general public. The work of activists begins after a successful march, when the increases and strengthening of support networks and the increased

[165] Also known as the 15-M movement, as the initial demonstration took place on May 15th.

[166] For example, the 1990 WTO protests in Seattle, Washington saw the entire protest demonized by the mass media because of the actions of only a portion of the participants (Deluca and Peebles 2002).

visibility of the issues can be used to leverage change. Campaigns will only see successful change enacted by maintaining their visibility and newsworthiness, and ensuring the endurance of their support networks (Yúdice 2003, 142-143). This desire for newsworthiness, however, can ensure that a spectacle is not only an event, but also a *media* spectacle with high levels of media attention on a specific event. Leo Chavez highlights the potential objectification of participants in a spectacle when they receive this level of media attention and the potential for these media events to become seen as objective representations (2013, 6).

Marches in Latin America

Latin America has a long history of using spectacle in rights-based campaigns, with marches, protests, and roadblocks often used to create disturbances to different degrees. The Zapatistas are the classic example of Indigenous rights organizing in Latin America, and provide a good example of the use of spectacle as well. They have organized numerous types of events at various points in their history, beginning with their original *levantamiento* in 1994 through to their "intergalactic" gatherings with international supporters in the late 1990's (Morello 2007).[167] Protest and marching are often used for specific demands as well. In 2000, 2003 and 2005, Bolivia saw a series of major protests and uprisings due problems with resource distribution, which resulted in Evo Morales becoming president (Morales and Conroy 2017). In 2011, however, Morales faced protests organized by the Indigenous organization CIDOB against the extractivist policies of his own government. These marches were carefully coordinated as a "symbol of popular struggle against the government" and strategically used government repression during the march to inspire even greater support (Morales and Conroy 2017, 40).

Often, as in the case of the early protests in Bolivia, these uprisings and protests are spontaneous or unaffiliated with a specific organization. The *piqueteros*,[168] for example, successfully used roadblocks during the early 2000's to protest poverty and unemployment in Argentina (Kaese and Wolff 2016). Likewise, Brazil saw mass protests against neoliberal policies and inflation throughout 2013, which were not begun by a single organization or group (Vanden 2017, 58).

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[167] For a review of the details of the Zapatista movement see Chapter 3.

[168] Picketers

This is use of events is facilitated by the use of social media and mobile technologies to coordinate individual movements.

Indigenous *Marchas* and *Levantamientos* in Ecuador

The use of mass demonstrations and marches is well established by both CONAIE and CONFENIAE. During times of political unrest or harsh abuses of the Indigenous peoples, these events provide an outlet to raise public awareness and a method of communication with both the government and outside supporters. Marches and *levantamientos*, such as those described below, have happened a few times throughout the history of CONAIE and CONFENIAE. The first, beginning on June 4, 1990 and lasting four days, was started as a way to raise awareness of land conflicts, and to press for a move towards *plurinacionalidad* in Ecuadorian political structure, which would see increased importance for Indigenous perspectives in Ecuadorian politics (Cuji Pucha and Chimbo Mayancela 2019). As explained by the CONAIE organizer Luis Macas, it was a "levantamiento contra la injusticia, por el derecho a una vida digna y a la autodeterminación de las nacionalidades indígenas que luchamos por defender nuestros legítimos derechos históricos"[169] (in Almeida et al. 1992, 17). The *levantamiento* used high visibility politics, blocking highways into major cities and effectively crippling the nation's transportation. It is recognized as not only the first major, but also one of the most effective, Indigenous movements in Ecuador (Becker 2008). A key factor in the success of the event was CONAIE's use of the *Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador* (ERPE) community radio program to spread awareness of the ultimate goals and daily progress of the movement (Ávalos Torres 2019; Cuji Pucha and Chimbo Mayancela 2019).

Marches are often used as a more limited form of protest, often without the expectation of specific changes to policy, but for public awareness-raising. The march described at the end of this chapter fits within this category. The first major march of this style was held in 1992, and was part of a symbolic resistance movement against the quincentennial celebrations of the "discovery" of Ecuador that the government were holding that year (Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango. 2003). The use of 1992 as a symbol for resistance had begun as early as the

[169] It was an "uprising against injustice, for the right to a dignified life and for the self-determination of the Indigenous nationalities who are fighting to defend our legitimate historical rights."

levantamiento in 1990, and had been in continuous use since then as a rallying call for Indigenous resistance. The *Caminata de Pastaza a Quito* continued supporting many of the goals which were put forward during the *levantamiento*, and which would continue to be important demands by Indigenous peoples in future protests. The specific demands could be summarized in two categories: territorial rights, including the right to financial benefit from extractive industries on traditional territories, and constitutional reform making Ecuador a multicultural and multinational state (Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango. 2003, 188). Throughout the march, and most particularly in its final stage as the participants neared Quito, the public followed the march through both print and broadcast media, none of which was under the control of the Indigenous peoples. Though the *Caminata* ended with a long delay before the government responded with only partial concessions that led to additional conflict before land titles were finally granted to various Amazonian Indigenous organizations, the main success of the march was to raise public awareness of the importance of Indigenous identity and the human rights that Indigenous peoples should hold (Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango. 2003, 209-210).[170]

The 1994 *levantamiento*, during the presidency of Sixto Durán Ballén, was in reaction to the creation of an agrarian development law supressing land reform and blocking the division of large properties (Guerrero 2000). The resulting expropriation of land and water from this law would significantly impact Indigenous peoples. This *levantamiento* was organized in a similar manner to that held in 1990, but lasted twenty days before eventually ending with concessions from the government. These concessions included changes to the law resulting in legal loopholes allowing for future Indigenous land claims (Guerrero 2000, 146). Most importantly though, this second *levantamiento* continued a symbolic transformation of Indigenous peoples in the eyes of the government and the Spanish speaking majority, destroying "la imagen de 'indio pasivo que hay que civilizar"[171] (Guerrero 2000, 145). During the discussions with the government leading to eventual concessions two figures played a key role in this public transformation, that of Dr. Luis Macas, then president of CONAIE, and Dr. Nina Pacari, an Indigenous lawyer who saw the discussions through to an eventual conclusion. The contrast of the colonial surroundings of the

[170] For further information on this first *Caminata*, see Whitten, Scott Whitten and Chango. 2003, which gives a detailed account of the entire process event, from the planning stages to the results and return to the Amazon.

[171] "the image of 'the passive indian that must be civilized"

Palacio de Carondelet and the traditionally dressed Indigenous leaders was brought to the forefront of the public imagination through newspaper images and television clips. This process of public demonstration cemented the role of Indigenous organizations like CONAIE as representatives of Indigenous peoples, and as major players in national politics (Guerrero 2000, 145-147).

Beginning during the mid-90's, and continuing today, Indigenous organizations like CONAIE and CONFENIAE have become integral within a popular coalition fighting for social change within Ecuador (Sawyer 2004). This has led to extremely successful campaigns that in some situations have overthrown presidents. The first such instance, in 1997, was held as a combined *levantamiento* and national strike which resulted in Congress voting to remove President Abdalá Bucaram. In addition to being an openly corrupt populist, Bucaram also planned strict austerity measures that would see the cost of gas rise, impacting mostly low-income citizens and resulting in massive turnout in the resulting strike (Almeida 2007; Economist 1997).

The plan for dollarization by the Ecuadorian government in January 2000 again led to a *levantamiento* in which Indigenous organizations combined forces with allies, this time including military personnel, resulting in a coup that resulted in the removal of President Jamil Mahuad from office (Jameson 2011). Although control was handed back to Vice President Gustavo Naboa on the following day and the plan for dollarization was completed, the heavy participation of CONAIE entitled them to be heard in government forums and to eventually secure small concessions later in the year (Jameson 2011, 66). Conflicts continued between organizations and the Naboa government however, in reaction to continuing austerity and market liberalization. Much like the conflict that occurred in Ecuador in late 2019, early 2001 saw a national strike arise over proposed increases to fuel prices. The widespread impact of issues such as fuel prices provide a strong unifying element to protests, and often result in events with appeal that extends significantly beyond the membership of Indigenous organizations. This was evident in the overthrow of Bucaram as well in 1997, which was one of the first examples of CONAIE's

successful use of alliances. This conflict also reached a conclusion of dialogue, small concessions and relatively little change (Jameson 2011, 67).[172]

The 2005 uprising that deposed yet another president, Lucio Gutierrez, was the first instance of unrest in recent history where large Indigenous organizations did not play a prominent role. Following his participation in the coup against President Mahuad, CONAIE had helped to elect President Gutierrez in 2002 as part of a coalition with the Indigenous political party Pachakutik. Though CONAIE initially offered their backing for Gutierrez prior to his election, both they and Pachakutik withdrew from the alliance only a short time later as he reneged on promises that he had made to support Indigenous rights, and pursued austerity policies much like his predecessors (Becker 2008; Lucero 2008; Jameson 2011). While CONAIE did not actively move against Gutierrez due to their weakened political power, popular protests quickly resulting in Congress voting to remove him from office (NotiSur 2005). The following year mobilizations were again organized by a broad-based coalition of social movements that included CONAIE, this time in reaction to the Free Trade Treaty agreement with the US, and a contract signed with the US oil company Occidental (Oxy) (EFE 2006). This unrest, occurring during the Presidency of Alfredo Palacio,[173] eventually resulted in reforms to the Hydrocarbons Law[174] and subsequently caused Oxy's contract to be revoked and oilfields to be reclaimed by the Ecuadorian government.

Rafael Correa and Ecuador's Indigenous organizations have had a tumultuous history, as Correa offered many promises to Indigenous peoples similar to those of Gutierrez. While CONAIE supported Correa's first two election campaigns, they over time withdrew that support due to increasing disagreements, particularly over the sale of extraction rights. The year 2009 saw one of a series of mobilizations that took place during the presidency of Correa, with CONAIE and *la*

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[172] It could be argued that this was the first example of real change being enacted through the *levantamientos* of CONAIE, as in the past they had seen limited real change despite initial optimism. The difference in this case was the alignment of CONAIE with a wide range of other social actors, indicating that the creation of networks provides the best possibility of effectively leveraging governmental change.

[173] Palacio was raised to the role from Vice President following Gutierrez's removal from office.

[174] Aspects of this law have been highly controversial at various times, including the alteration made in 2006, which allowed the government to tax additional profits made by companies in times of elevated oil prices by 50% (a year later raised to 99%) (Bédard et al. 2015). The current text of the Hydrocarbons Law can be read here: http://www.secretariahidrocarburos.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/06/LEY-DE-HIDROCARBUROS.pdf

Junta de Regantes y Agua Potable[175] organizing a march for the *Defensa del Agua, la Vida y el Estado Plurinacional.*[176] Another march, occurring in 2012, was organized by CONAIE alongside various provincial governments and the *Frente Popular*[177] for similar goals as the *Marcha por el Agua, la Vida y la Dignidad de los Pueblos.*[178] This march moved from the far south of the country to the capital in Quito, with a range of local events taking place in communities along the way, designed to increase public awareness of the issues (Ortiz Crespo 2016). Correa's presidency, lasting three terms, has arguably lessened the effectiveness of Indigenous organizations' mobilization, partly due to the public perception of him as a leftist that they should be supporting, but also due to the criminalization of protest and resulting arrest of many Indigenous leaders organizing movements (Becker 2016; Monahan 2013).

Values of Movements for CONAIE and CONFENIAE

By utilizing the style of protest discussed in the examples above, organizations seek to increase their visibility, capitalize on immediate action, and build networks and solidarity. These events offer an opportunity to communicate with the government in a format that is publicly visible and therefore less likely for the government to disregard. The huge numbers of people physically present on the roads and in the capital can shut down traffic, and prevent the functioning of businesses and the government. Such a large number of people is extremely public, bringing the eyes of the country, the region, and even the world to bear on the political situation in Ecuador. During a march or *levantamiento* the government is unable to conduct negotiations with the Indigenous peoples in a circumspect manner, and is forced to choose between either open discussion or repression. With the high visibility inherent in these events, the government also has to consider the image that is being presented to the world, which organizations see as potentially leading them to avoid repression as long as possible for fear of international backlash. Increasingly since the early 2000's, the accessibility and prevalence of mobile technologies has played a major role in this increased visibility during events. With the ability to take photos and record videos on smartphones, and the increasing ability to post these to social media when they

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[175] Irrigation and potable water boards

[176] Defense of Water, Life and the Plurinational State

[177] The Popular Front (FP) is an alliance of social organizations and non-profits that is a frequent ally of CONAIE.

[178] March for Water, Life and the Dignity of the Communities

are taken all activities during spectacles are under scrutiny. The use of hashtags and linked accounts has increased this visibility even further, as text, photos and videos can be immediately associated with an event and instantly accessible. This does work both ways, as the activities of protesters are as likely to be under scrutiny as those of authority figures, regulating behaviour on both sides.

Such public demonstrations may also lead to more immediate conversations as government attempt to end a stalemate, preventing the government from delaying dealing with an issue that may be pressing for Indigenous peoples. This has often been the case for issues such as resource extraction, which can have serious and immediate impacts on a community, but which the government may be hesitant to address since resource extraction provides income to the government. Often the government manages to side-step this benefit, however, as they may offer the concession of 'investigation' or further 'dialogue.'

Figure 8.2. Photo of the leader of the *La Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados* as they enter Quito's Old Town. Photo by author.

I walked through Quito's Old Town, moving towards the route that I knew the march would be taking as they came into the city. I had met with everyone the day before during the Consejo Amplio, so I had a pretty good idea of where I needed to be. I heard the noise building, with the crowds on the sidewalk growing thicker as I moved further towards the center of the district. As I turned a corner, I finally spotted the march coming up the Calle Venezuela. Everyone on the sidewalks was turned to watch their arrival, drawn by the calls from the march coordinator leading with a megaphone. It was almost overwhelming as the march approached, with huge numbers of people moving in a wave towards me. The closer the march got the more people surrounded me, with many journalists taking photographs as the march neared us.

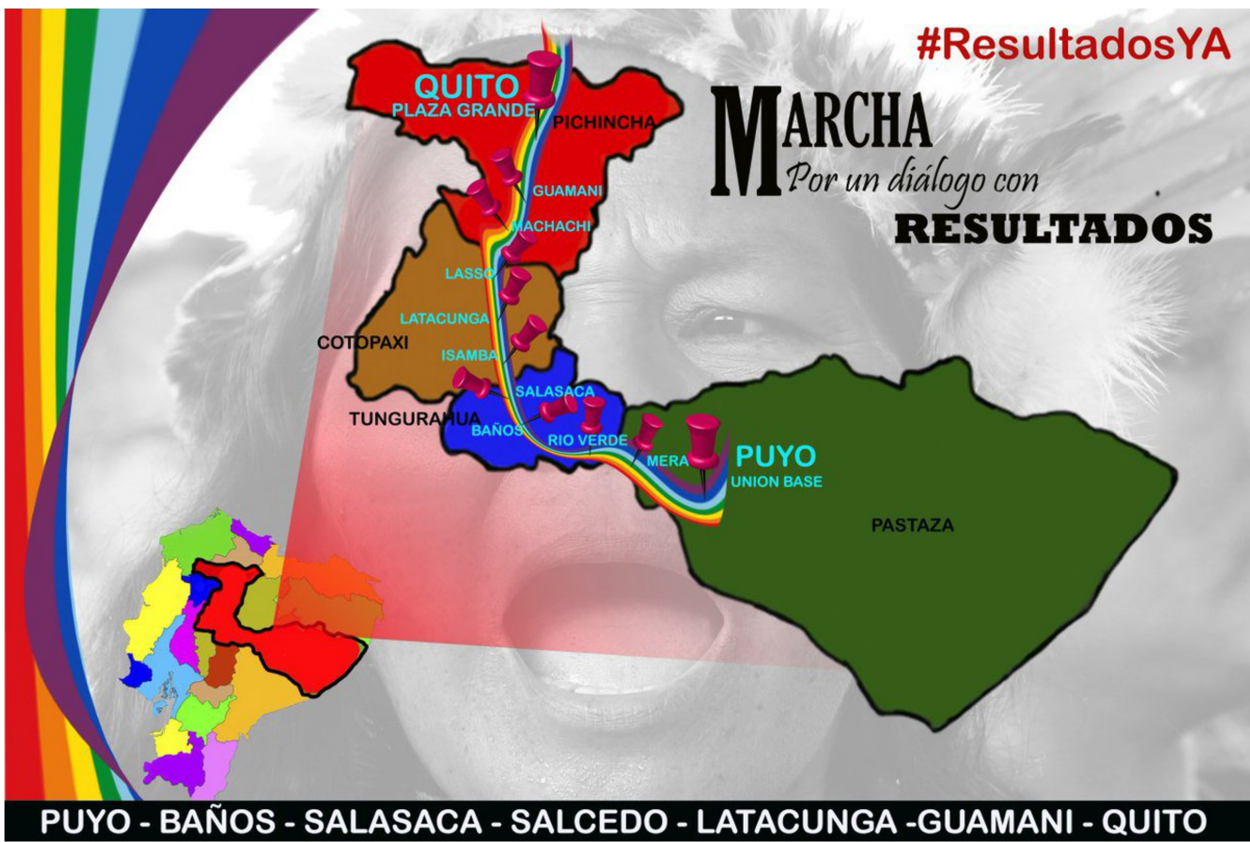

Figure 8.3 Map showing the route of the Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados. Publicly available on Twitter here: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DPwqPlgWkAEa4G8.jpg.

Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados

The march that occurred in late November and early December of 2017 was a little bit different than past marches. While those that occurred before focused on ending abuses or challenging specific policies, this march was titled the *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados.*[179] The positive connotation of this march, for open dialogue rather than as an explicit means of dissent, reflects the changing political environment of Ecuador following the elections from February to April of 2017. The new president, Lenín Moreno, claimed to be interested in encouraging greater discussion with Indigenous peoples and respecting the rights promised to them by the constitution. Months after taking office and without substantive changes taking place, however, the march was called as a means to encourage Moreno to follow through on his promises.

Beginning with approximately 500 people at the CONAIE headquarters in Unión Báse on November 28, the march travelled west and then nearly due north. Carefully planned to end on December 11 at the capitol building in Quito, the march utilized a specific set of stops along the route with two rest days built into the schedule. After the march left Puyo, the media quickly picked up the story, discussing the march's progress, giving quotes from organization leaders, and commenting on the issues that the organizations were trying to bring to public awareness.

This march presented a shift from previous marches organized by CONAIE and CONFENIAE, with increased importance placed on the representation of the event due to widespread social media use. While marches and events are also organized with awareness of how they will be seen by the public, perception and image seemed to have elevated importance for this march. In the past, marches had engaged with the mainstream media, providing interviews and photo opportunities, and had even provided press releases to the media, but this march saw the creation of an internal media team. This group of youth, named the *Lanceros Digitales* within CONFENIAE, was tasked with the creation of images and videos that could be used to promote the march to the broader public, to present a curated image of the march to mainstream media, and to record the march for posterity. Many of the youth involved in the *Lanceros* were students from my photography workshops, and had been working on improving the quality of their images for use specifically in online formats. This group worked closely with the

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[179] March for a Dialogue with Results

Communication Director, Andrés Tapía, ensuring that they were presenting a message that aligned with the communications plan of the organization. Most articles written about the march included quotes from Indigenous leaders and tweets directly from their accounts, but were short and stuck to the basic facts of their demands and the logistics of the march.[180] Articles that explicitly criticized the organizations were rare, and were as likely to be critical from a leftist perspective as from the conservative right.[181] La Hora, one of the major newspapers in Ecuador, provided coverage in its regional papers as the march moved across the country with detail and explanations to help readers understand the issues.[182]

Much of the communication throughout the march took place on social media sites and using mobile technologies, allowing frequent updates as the march progressed. The posts included photos taken during the days of marching, information about the goals of the march intended to increase awareness throughout the broader public, and hashtags specific to the event, most notably #ResultadosYA and #RumboAQuito. These various elements were recombined through apps to create posters, memes and maps that could be widely shared, and that were intended to engage different segments of the public. Typically, images used included the faces of individuals dressed in traditional clothing, the line of leaders walking at the front of the march, the various banners carried by marchers (sometimes including the participants holding them, others focusing only on their hands), or broad views of the crowds of march participants. While these images centered the Indigenous presence in the march, particularly highlighting the leaders of both CONAIE and many of the smaller regional Indigenous organizations, there was also a demonstration of the broad range of support from other social sectors as the march moved into the Quito and the number of marchers grew.

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[180] http://pruebas.pichinchauniversal.com.ec/marcha-de-la-conaie-avanza-hacia-quito/; https://www.eldiario.ec/noticias-manabi-ecuador/455780-indigenas-inician-en-amazonia-caminata-a-quito-en-busca-respuesta-de-gobierno/; https://www.vistazo.com/seccion/pais/actualidad-nacional/marcha-de-la-conaie-llega-hasta-el-centro-de-quito; https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/indigenas-confeniae-marcha-dialogo-leninmoreno.html

[181] https://www.laizquierdadiario.cl/La-Confederacion-de-Nacionalidades-Indigenas-de-Ecuador-marcha-para-pedir-mas-dialogo?id_rubrique=1201

[182] One of the articles written by La Hora for Zamora province is available here: https://issuu.com/la_hora/docs/diario_la_hora_zamora_05_de_diciemb_3125276a66e94f/11; another article from La Hora's Imbabura edition with photos and quotes can be found here: https://lahora.com.ec/imbabura-carchi/noticia/1102119073/marcha-cumple-hoy-congreso-ampliado-en-cotopaxi

Figure 8.4: March banners, taken by the author on Dec. 7, 2017.

Figure 8.5. Marchers, taken by Jesús, photovoice workshop participant and member of the *Lanceros Digitales* on Dec. 3, 2017.

Asamblea de la Marcha and Exhibition

On the day when I went to join the march, one of the main purposes was to gather the files from each of the photographers so that I would have a chance to print some of the photos. Much like the exhibition that we held at the end of the three photovoice workshops, Andrés Tapía had asked me if it would be possible to hold an exhibition of the photography of the march on the final day before they entered the capital. The exhibition was intended as a way to unite the diverse groups of marchers, many of whom had only been able to participate during a portion of the march, and to illustrate the march from the perspective of the marchers to the media who were planning to attend the *Asamblea* of the marchers with *sectores populares*[183] that would be

[183]Though this was designed as an event in which the organizations could interact with broader public, including a large number of mass media reporters, this event in practice much more closely resembled a *Consejo Amplio.* This title translates to something like "large" or "broad" consultation, and is a process that both organizations undertake periodically, often multiple times per year. During these events communities from throughout the Amazon (in the case of CONFENIAE) or the country (in this case, and more generally in the case of CONAIE) travel to a central location to participate. Everyone is given the opportunity to speak about issues that they deem important, leaders may speak for their communities, the priorities of the organizations are evaluated for moving forward in the near future and may

held before the final push into the capital. While some of these photos were ones that I had taken on the day I participated in the march, the vast majority were taken by the *Lanceros* throughout the early days of the march.

On December 9th the marchers arrived at the Mercado Mayorista on the outskirts of Quito in the early afternoon, and began organizing for the gathering the following day in the late morning. On December 10th I travelled down from Quito towards the market in the southern fringes of the city. I wandered through the maze of the market, asking vendor after vendor for directions to the place where the Indigenous marchers were staying and finally receiving instructions to leave through the main gate and find the entrance to a side section. As I walked in, it was evident that the preparations were already underway. In a grassy yard a group of youth had setup a stage area with the long banner carried throughout the march providing a bright splash of color under an awning. Tables were lined up along the front of the space for the leaders who would be the main speakers, with rows of chairs ready for the participants who would contribute to the discussions throughout the day. Tweets and Facebook posts went out from the organizations' communicators throughout the day, reshared many times by support networks across their social media platforms.

Andrés had a clear plan for the photo exhibition, and after we had looked through some of the prints I had made, he assigned the *Lanceros Digitales* to help me setup. I had brought the yarn from the previous exhibition to hang the photos from, and we quickly realized that the only way we would have enough space would be to create an outdoor display. Most of the photos ended up displayed against the chain-link fence that divided the grassy area from the building complex, with the remainder strung to either side of the stage area. The display of images created by Indigenous people, of Indigenous people vocalizing their demands in a public forum, and displayed for the benefit of Indigenous people who are actively supporting and engaging with the demands being made, provides an example of Indigenous visual sovereignty in action (Raheja 2010).

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be incorporated into larger organizational campaigns and goals. CONFENIAE held their 5th *Consejo Amplio* de 2017 on November 20th, allowing them to identify the key issues of their supporters.

The exhibition proved to be extremely popular with the participants. One woman commented that she loved seeing herself in the photos, as well as the photos of her friends and family. Many organization members who were not able to participate during most of the march also appreciated the photos, one saying that he loved being able to see the progress of the march even after the fact since it made him feel proud of what they were trying to accomplish. By the end of the afternoon, the comments made it was clear that Andrés' goals for the exhibition had been accomplished, as the visuals seemed to be a unifying factor for many of the participants, and reinvigorated them at the end of a long march.

Figures 8.6 and 8.7. Photo exhibition at the *Mercado Mayorista* outside Quito, taken by author on Dec. 10, 2017.

The *Asamblea* lasted all afternoon, providing an opportunity for additional organization members to join the gathering before the final stage of the march. Speakers used a bullhorn to allow themselves to be heard, with CONAIE's Communication Director, Apawki Castro, taking notes throughout on the only laptop present. Around the organization members gathered in the chairs, a fringe of other observers hovered on the edge of the event. Participants wandered in and out of the *Asamblea*, looking at the photos scattered around the area, getting snacks and drinks to share amongst themselves from the market stalls, and seeking out shade as the midday sun overwhelmed them. After all who had wanted to spoke, the *Asamblea* wrapped up in the afternoon with time for the youth to clean up and for everyone to prepare for their final day. As we took down the images from the exhibition, participants repeatedly asked whether they could buy the prints of themselves. I ended up leaving the decision in the hands of Andrés, handing over the prints to the *Lanceros* so that CONFENIAE could decide whether they wanted to keep them for future exhibits, gain some income from selling them at a low price to the participants, or giving them away for participants to have a keepsake.

The next morning, the group began the march into the capital, by this point having grown to a crowd that Andrés Tápia had heard estimated at ten thousand participants from across Ecuador. While the main core of the march remained the same – leaders from CONAIE and CONFENIAE who had been walking from Puyo, youth involved in the promotion of the march, and members of smaller Indigenous organizations who had chosen to participate in solidarity – additional groups had joined the march to add their voices and raise their own concerns to the government. People flooded the streets as the march entered the center of the city's historic quarter, with rainbow banners everywhere. As this was an explicitly peaceful event, activities outside of the government house focused on chanting and waving banners, with leaders speaking to the media, and the only occasional examples of misbehavior (like climbing the government building's façade) quickly resolved by the soldiers lined ap around the edge of the Plaza Grande.

Figures 8.8, 8.9 & 8.10. March arrival in Quito, taken by author on Dec. 11, 2017.

March Outcomes

Having watched CONAIE and CONFENIAE's leaders enter the Palacio de Carondelet to meet with the president, I left the marchers in the early afternoon to pack my bags and fly back to Canada that night. Despite my physical distance, I was able to watch the results of these talks as they unfolded online. Initially the interactions between the government and the organizations seemed promising, with positive acknowledgement of the demands made during the talks, and promises to stop the sale of extraction rights for Indigenous lands without a process of prior consultation taking place. In the two years since, however, these promises have broken down and the country has exploded into even greater conflict around a range of issues. As mentioned, the recent national strike revolves largely around the imposition of austerity measures, specifically increasing petroleum prices through the elimination of subsidies that were put in place by ex-president Correa. Though discussions that occurred with CONAIE's leaders did eventually end the conflicts with the government for the immediate future, it remains to be seen how the relationship between Moreno and the Indigenous peoples will develop from here. The long view is that by building these connections and this level of visibility for the organizations now they will have greater resources to pull on later if they need to address continuing conflicts with the government.[184]

Conclusions

[184] As was briefly discussed in Chapter 6, exactly this happened in 2019, when the organizations networked with diverse social sectors to reverse an austerity bill.

As with all of the mobilizations that CONAIE and CONFENIAE carries out, the goal of the *Marcha por un Díalogo con Resultados* was to achieve meaningful change in interactions with the government. While the concrete results seem in this sense to have been limited, as the first march since the election of Moreno and a move away from Correa's presidency it may have served a more important purpose – to demonstrate to the public and the government alike the continuing logistical power of the organizations. The *Marcha* was by far the largest event organized by either of the organizations since Correa's repressive policies were put into effect, sending the message to the public that the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador were looking for positive change.

The march served as an important unifying event for the participants, providing an opportunity to physically claim representation, using the presence of participants' bodies to pressure the government to respond to demands. By having time to demonstrate their commitment to the movement, to interact and see one another, and to share their opinions during the *Asamblea* before the entry into Quito, participants were able to reinforce their role as individuals in claiming their rights. The reaction of participants to the photo exhibition can be seen as an extension of this desire, providing physical documentation of their participation and a chance to share their experiences through visual as well as verbal means. By holding the exhibition at the same time as the *Asamblea*, participants were given a final opportunity to establish their solidarity through shared experience before the final entry into the capital. Andrés demonstrated his keen awareness of the power of visual representation when he asked me to help coordinate this exhibition, taking advantage of an opportunity that had not presented itself at previous marches. The increasing accessibility of cameras, the skill of the *Lanceros Digitales* to take advantage of that technology, and my own presence as someone who could support the coordination of the exhibit, all combined to move the photos from a purely digital format to a shared event. Though this process too has some elements of spectacle, such as increasing visibility, the creation of an event to draw participants together, and using the visual aesthetics of the photos to focus the attention of participants on specific elements of the march, it was largely an *internally* shared event. The *Asamblea* drew together an audience of organization members, with only a small number of journalists present, and a focus more on solidifying the group

dynamic before the main spectacle of entering Quito the following day than on the way that it would be presented to a wider public.

Planned in a very short time, this march would not have been as successful or seen such large levels of participation without online communication methods, particularly social media and the constant use of mobile technologies to post updates throughout the event. The Communication Directors, Apawki Castro and Andrés Tapía, members of the *Lanceros Digitales*, and general participants all shared photos and news on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, throughout the march. These posts inspired participation from supporters throughout the march, sometimes for only a day and sometimes for the remainder of the march with the level of participation growing as the group passed through towns on the way to Quito. The communication raised awareness, but the event provided an opportunity to develop solidarity among the support network, and raised the visibility of the organizations through the use of spectacle as they entered Quito. While thousands of tweets virally spreading online can make an impact to perception, thousands of bodies blocking downtown traffic are difficult to ignore. Online communication efforts are coordinated with physical manifestations like this one to draw attention to issues that may otherwise not be fully understood, or that may not gain sufficient attention if they were confined purely to an online communication platform. CONAIE and CONFENIAE, like many other organizations, have a belief that increased media visibility contributes to an increase in networking, which encourages more participation in events and provides them with greater ability to enact change. Whether or not this is truly the case, it seems to be the presence of bodies in the street that these two organizations see as the desired outcome of their communication practices.

Conclusion

Understanding the representational practices of CONAIE and CONFENIAE as Indigenous organizations in Ecuador requires knowledge of long and complex histories, a wide range of current circumstances, constantly shifting relationships of support, and frequently developing access to new technologies. Conceptualizing this intricate tapestry through the use of Caroline Levine's (2015) concept of *forms* provides a method for identifying the range of factors that influence any single situation or event, and a way to highlight where productive ruptures exist in the fabric.

Of the wide range of forms, it is the Network that seems to have the greatest impact on the representational practices of Indigenous organizations in Ecuador. This was true both in online communication practices, such as social media campaigns, and on-the-ground when sharing knowledge, developing skills and protesting. This use of online networking was particularly prevalent for CONFENIAE, which used social media to connect members despite the limitations of mobile data infrastructure in the Amazonian region. This may speak to the broader power of communication technologies when they are approached from a communal mindset, as not every individual needs to be connected for useful representation to take place. Events, campaigns, and messages can be shared among and within organizations and nationalities, and can be spread outside on a communal basis. There are potential drawbacks to this approach, including the ventriloquism and romanticism discussed within this dissertation, but the benefits for remote populations with limited connection may outweigh the risks. The other important aspect of these communication practices that needs to be noted is the continued importance of on-the-ground actions, which are not replaced by online communication methods, but are rather supported and enhanced by them. For inspiring connection and dedication to a cause, online communication does not beat on-the-ground action.

Forms in Social Movements

Like all aspects of daily life, organizations and social movements exist in highly complex circumstances, impacted and overlaid with a wide range of forms that both structure their actions and allow for disruptions when these forms collide and conflict (Levine 2015). Each type of form

is visible in the examples that were discussed throughout this work. Wholes are the most pervasive of the forms, existing in the enclosure of national boundaries, delineating and cutting off the area of Indigenous territories, regardless of their traditional extent.[185] The boundaries of mining concessions also have a significant impact on the Indigenous communities, creating conflicts on national and international scale when they overlap with Indigenous territories. Wholes can also function as benign forms in Indigenous interests, however, offering structure through the delineation of each organization in both social terms and in terms of the physical base for each organization. Wholes have not consistently remained stable in this research, with opportunities such as the *Encuentros Nacionales de Comunicación Comunitaria*, discussed in Chapter 6, providing a rupture point for the closed structure of the university system. Knowledge sharing events repeatedly broke the boundaries of defined wholes, with the interaction of networks creating and redefining relationships.

Hierarchical forms also function as both hostile and benign examples, with the stereotypical racial and class hierarchies on one side and the functional hierarchies of the organizations' structure on the other. This organizational hierarchy is readily apparent in CONAIE's role as an umbrella organization, as well as CONFENIAE's role as an umbrella to various *nacionalidades*. Hierarchies can also be ruptured however, and the use of social media may provide one of the clearest opportunities for this break as the reliance on official representation by the organizations' leaders loses its exclusive nature and organization members increasingly speak to their own experiences. Rhythm is a key form within CONAIE and CONFENIAE, as the changes to leadership both within the organizations and within the government result in continuities that can be challenged. Changes to the government following elections, such as happened during the research discussed in this dissertation provide possible points of flexibility. The *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados*, discussed in Chapter 8, occurred during just such a point, with the transition to the presidency of Lenín Moreno offering the potential to bring Indigenous issues to the foreground of political discussion.

Centrality of Networks

[185] In this I refer to territories that traditionally spanned borders, such as the division between Ecuador and Peru.

Throughout this work the value of the network as a key form repeatedly became evident. Networks, more than any other form, offer opportunities for organizations to alter the structures in which they function, providing greater access to knowledge and resources outside of local communities, and increasing support for their contestations of the current power structures. Chapter 6 highlighted some of these networks, elucidating the links that can be developed when groups find shared interests and identities to help solidify their connections. The benefits that CONAIE and CONFENIAE receive from their connections to academic institutions is a strong example, as they gain access to knowledge and skills that might be otherwise inaccessible, and which can then be shared throughout the networks of the organizations themselves. The development and strengthening of these networks were the key activities that I observed the Communications Directors enacting throughout all of my research. Sometimes this development was evident as they organized training opportunities, that brought together organization members with an NGO focusing in another area, like environmentalism. Sometimes this strengthening was evident in the planning of events that pulled together as many Indigenous organizations as possible from around the country.

The physical infrastructure available to the organizations is another example of a network, and one which has obvious limitations for communities living in remote locations. As the map in Figure 1.2 shows, there are very limited options for both ICT and transportation technologies in Amazonian communities. These limitations are often navigated through the use of complimentary social networks, creating opportunities for communication where there were none before.

Online Forms

Online engagements often take the form of networks, facilitated by the interconnected structure of the Internet itself. Social media is the most obvious example of this, with connections developed between user profiles through interactions and links, and disparate posts linked through the use of hashtags. CONAIE and CONFENIAE take full advantage of these features, using their online connections to increase the visibility of campaigns, to link with sources of material support outside of Ecuador, and to develop relationships with other organizations

around the world with the hope of offering mutual support through sharing of knowledge, skills, and resources.

Each website functions as a bounded whole as well though, with clearly defined sets of rules that users have to conform to, and structured by specific algorithms dictating what users are exposed to as opposed to what they have to search out. These are negative allowances of these forms, which restrict their useful based purely on their design. It is possible that the limitations of these allowances can be overcome through the use of a range of different platforms, creating multiple overlapping networks in an attempt to reach broader connections.

Role of On-the-Ground Events

Regardless of the forms at play, the relationship between online and on-the-ground actions is vital for the organizations. The connections developed through participation in on-the-ground networking events like those discussed in Chapter 6 and 7 offer a strong basis for future actions, helping to bind a range of groups together for potentially more stable support in the future. While online networks may help to develop these connections, they are put into action through on-the-ground events, which take advantage of these rupture points in visible and productive ways.

Final Thoughts

CONAIE and CONFENIAE both have well-developed communication strategies, using new technologies as they develop and become available with careful consideration for their impacts on the larger goals and public perception of each of the organizations. They each view visual elements, including photographs, videos, and memes, as essential to their representations online, while also understanding that these representations are open to interpretation, leading them to a desire to curate and control these images while also understanding the impossibility of that task. As a visual anthropologist this became my opportunity to productively contribute to the goals of the organizations, sharing my skills and knowledge with organization members much the same way that other members of the networks do through training events. These opportunities to collaborate throughout my research provided me with greater insight into the perspectives of the organizational members, as well as a closer participation in the daily working of the organizations. Without this collaborative opportunity I would not have gained the insight or been

able to draw the conclusions that I was able to. Online research alone would have clearly shown these weaknesses, as it was the value of a continuous relationship between communication methods that was the most powerful finding of this research. While these communication methods on their own do not progress the goals of the Indigenous organizations in Ecuador, they form a single strand of a much more complex tapestry of action that is hopefully contributing to gradual change.

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Appendix A: Sixteen Demands Proposed by the CONAIE in the 1990 Uprising

1. Public declaration that Ecuador is a plurinational country (to be ratified in the constitution).
2. Grant of lands ad titles to lands to the nationalities.
3. Solutions to water and irrigation needs.
4. Absolution from indigenous debts to FODERUMA ad the National Development Bank.
5. Freezing of consumer prices.
6. Conclusion of priority projects in Indian communities.
7. Nonpayment of rural land taxes.
8. Expulsion of the Summer Language Institute.
9. Free commercial and handicraft activity.
10. CONAIE protection of archaeological sites.
11. Officialization of Indian medicine.
12. Cancellation of the governmental decree that created parallel land reform granting bodies.
13. Immediate granting of funds by the government to the nationalities.
14. Granting of funds for bilingual education.
15. Respect for the rights of the child.
16. Fixing of fair prices for products.

(Pallares 2002:228 – Appendix)

Appendix B: Demands Proposed During the Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados

Image shows the poster advertising the demands made by Indigenous organizations during the *Marcha por un Diálogo con Resultados*. Text translates to: "March for a Dialogue with Results. Demands: Amnesty for the social

fighters; Institutionalization of the process of dialogue; Solution to the conflicts over land and territory; Restitution of Bilingual Intercultural Education; Real policies to support peasant agriculture and a solution to community transportation; Free access to universities; An end to extractive concessions in Indigenous territories and water sources; Restitution of Pluriversidad and creation of new institutions for pueblos and nationalities; Support fund for Pachakutik; Fight against corruption at all levels; and Frequencies for CONAIE, communities, pueblos, nationalities and unions. Image retrieved from: https://amazonwatch.org/assets/images/2017-marcha-por-un-dialogo-con-resultados-demandas.jpg