



## Bridging the great divide: State, civil society, and ‘participatory’ conservation mapping in a resource extraction zone



Timothy B. Norris\*

UCSC Environmental Studies, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA

### A B S T R A C T

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It is recognized that participatory mapping techniques in the context of indigenous societies are fraught with dilemmas around the uneven distribution of power, differing understandings of boundaries drawn across the landscape, and incommensurable epistemologies of the human relationship with the environment. At the same time policy makers and practitioners recognize the value of local knowledge in planning and management practices, including for the planning and management of conservation areas. Mindful of this dilemma geographers and researchers in allied fields such as applied anthropology have tested participatory and inclusive mapping techniques across a variety of cultural contexts over the last several decades. This article evaluates the outcomes of a participatory conservation zoning exercise undertaken in a mineral extraction zone—the Cordillera Huayhuash—in the Andes of Central Peru and contributes a case study to this body of work. The principal method used was the construction of a manual ‘GIS’ upon which local communities could draw their zoning vision as an overlay on transparent acetate. The evaluation of the work focuses on the governance outcomes from the process rather than the map products that were drawn. The findings confirm that such processes are rife with the dilemmas identified in prior research, yet the zoning project also helped ‘bridge’ the great divide between the state and civil society by building trust through dialog. The findings also indicate that the chosen approach can be used as a ground truthing tool to identify accuracy and completeness problems in the cadastral database maintained by the government of Peru.

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### Introduction

Efforts to align broad conservation objectives with the protection of indigenous territories from extractive activities through participatory mapping methods in a development context are not new (Bernard, Barbosa, & Carvalho, 2011; Chapin, Lamb, & Threlkeld, 2005; Herlihy & Knapp, 2003; Nietschmann, 1995; Poole, 1995; Sletto, 2002; Smith, Benavides, Pariona, & Tuesta, 2003; Stocks, 2003; Velázquez et al., 2009). Indeed this combination to defend ‘indigenous’ territory and, at the same time, slow the encroachment of resource extraction through “counter-mapping” (Peluso, 1995) has a long history. For example, one of the first known counter maps drawn in Peru is Guaman Poma’s map of *Tahuantinsuyo* (the Inca empire) drafted less than one hundred years after the conquest in the early 17th century (Guaman Poma, 1615; Turnball, 1993). The map, combined with lengthy textual accounts, is an elaborately established claim that the Spanish were

invaders in Inca territory. The format of the publication attempts to match that of the Spanish chroniclers; in this way Guaman Poma sought to gain legitimacy for his text. The King of Spain likely never saw the work and as history has shown, the effort failed completely. A more recent example lies with the mapping efforts of the Aymara people of Lake Titicaca to retain their autonomous control over the harvest of reed beds (Orlove, 1991, 1993). In this case Orlove observed that the maps made by the Aymara communities and those of the central government were quite distinct and little actual communicative dialog took place; perhaps another failure.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these apparent difficulties maps continue to be drawn by indigenous and/or native people in Peru (and elsewhere) with the intention to make territorial claims or to defend territory from extractive activities such as mining and drilling for oil and gas (for examples see Hinojosa & Hennermann, 2012; IFAD, 2009; Reyes-

<sup>1</sup> The cultural divide between Lima based government natural resource management agencies and the actual land managers in the Andes of Peru is so large that, to paraphrase Orlove, the epistemologies are simply incommensurable and dialog is impossible at worst and difficult at best (Norris, 2005).

\* Tel.: +1 (831) 466 9466.

E-mail addresses: [tbnorris@ucsc.edu](mailto:tbnorris@ucsc.edu), [tibben@ocf.berkeley.edu](mailto:tibben@ocf.berkeley.edu).

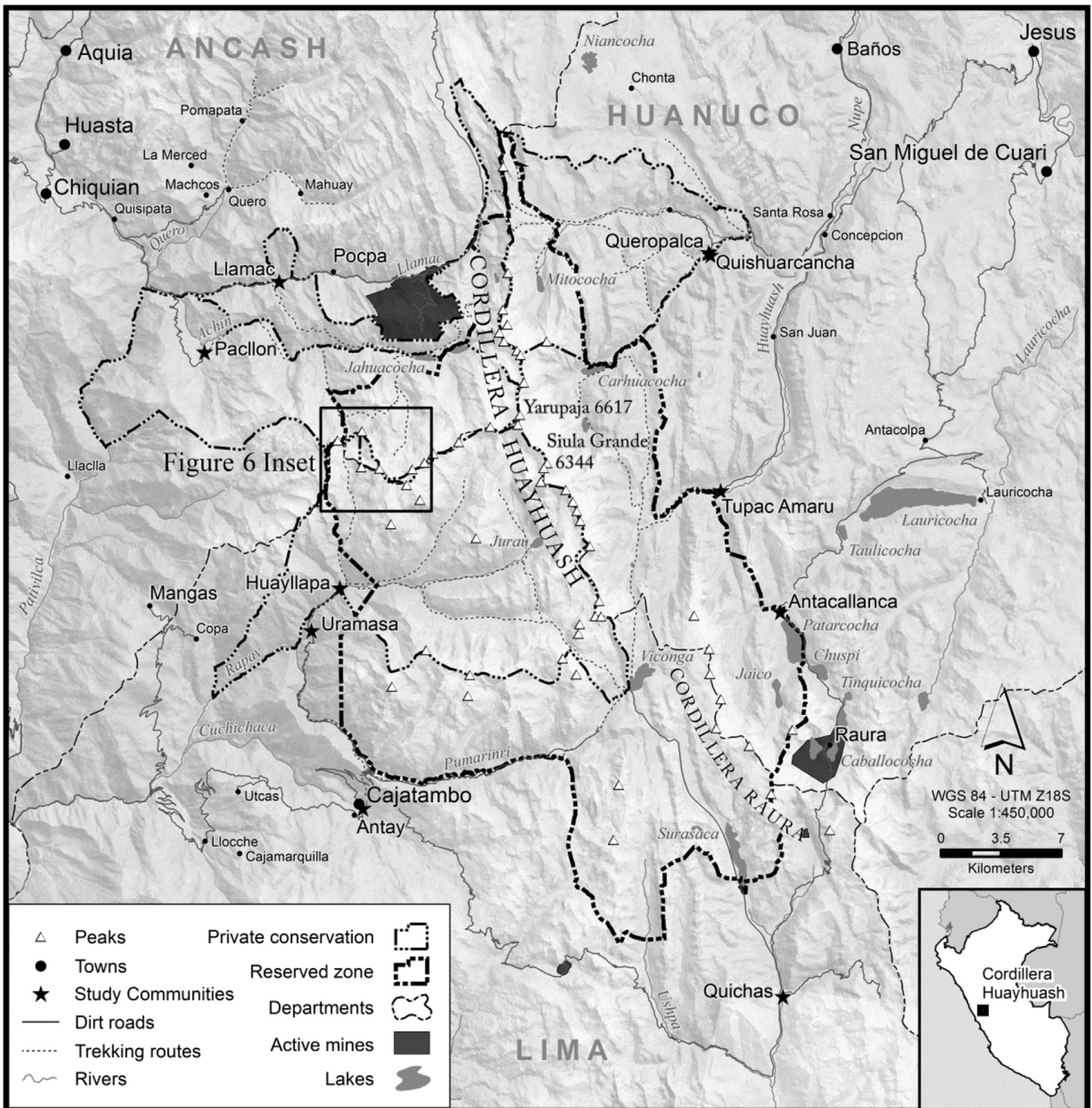


Fig. 1. The Cordillera Huayhuash.

García et al., 2012; Scurrah, 2008). A contemporary and pressing case in Peru can be drawn from the efforts of native communities in the Amazon basin. For over thirty years native leaders have been drafting maps and gaining legal title for community lands through government agencies, often with the help of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Benavides, 2010). Now, as exploration for, and extraction of, minerals and hydrocarbon accelerates, these maps and titles will be tested as mechanisms for defense of territory confronted by pressure from multi-national corporations (Smith, 2005; Urteaga-Corvetto, 2012). The community mapping process is used as a ground truth method to correct

and/or better inform state cartographic efforts, as a way to offer counter-narratives to the unused territory story often told by state resource management agencies intent on granting extractive concessions to outside interests, and as a means for local communities to “discover” and document extractive activities (Smith, 2011). In cases such as these some might argue that “more indigenous territory can be re-claimed by maps than guns” (Nietschmann, 1995, p 37) while others would argue that the only legitimate map is that of the state backed by the power of guns (Wood, 2010).

In approaching this debate it is recognized that participatory mapping techniques in the context of indigenous societies are

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