

# Extractive development and the right to self-determination: Indigenous communities in Guatemala

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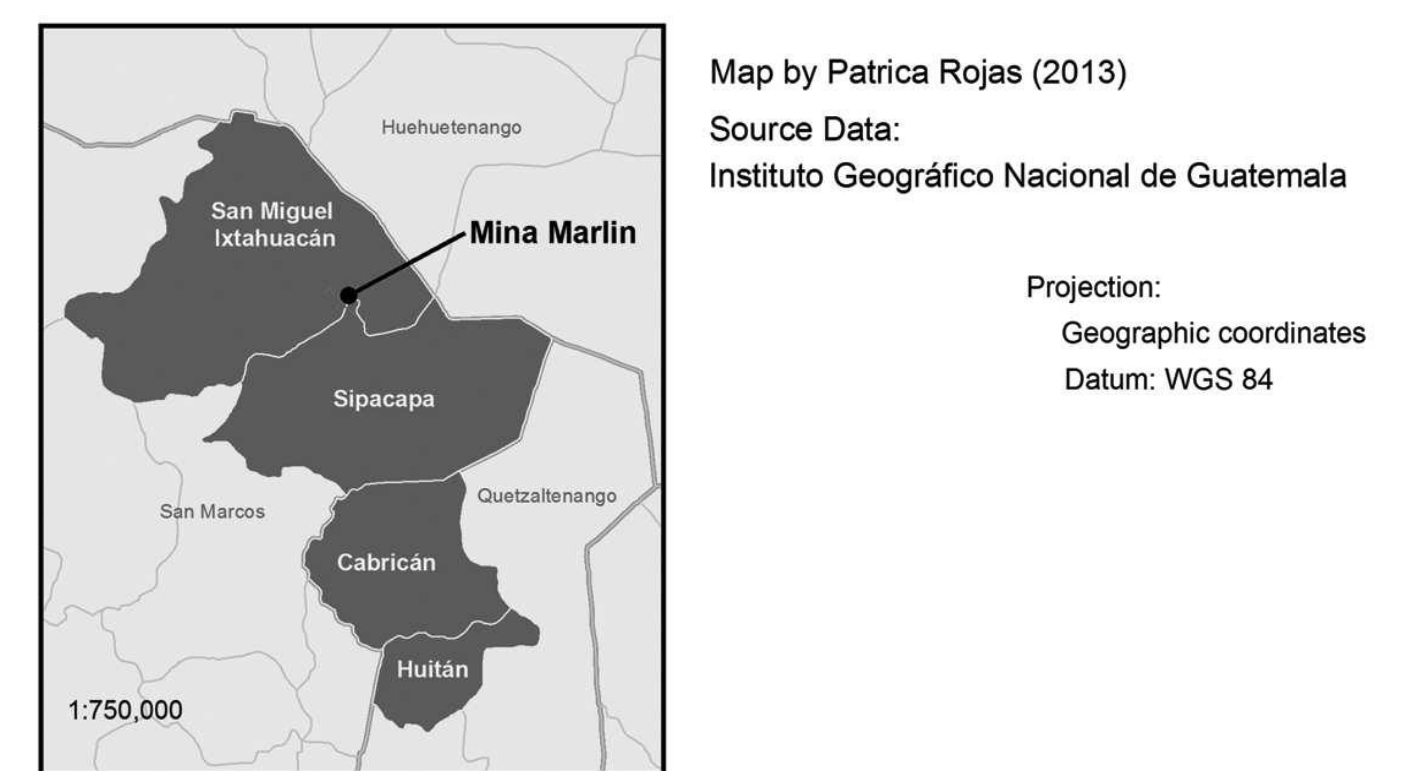
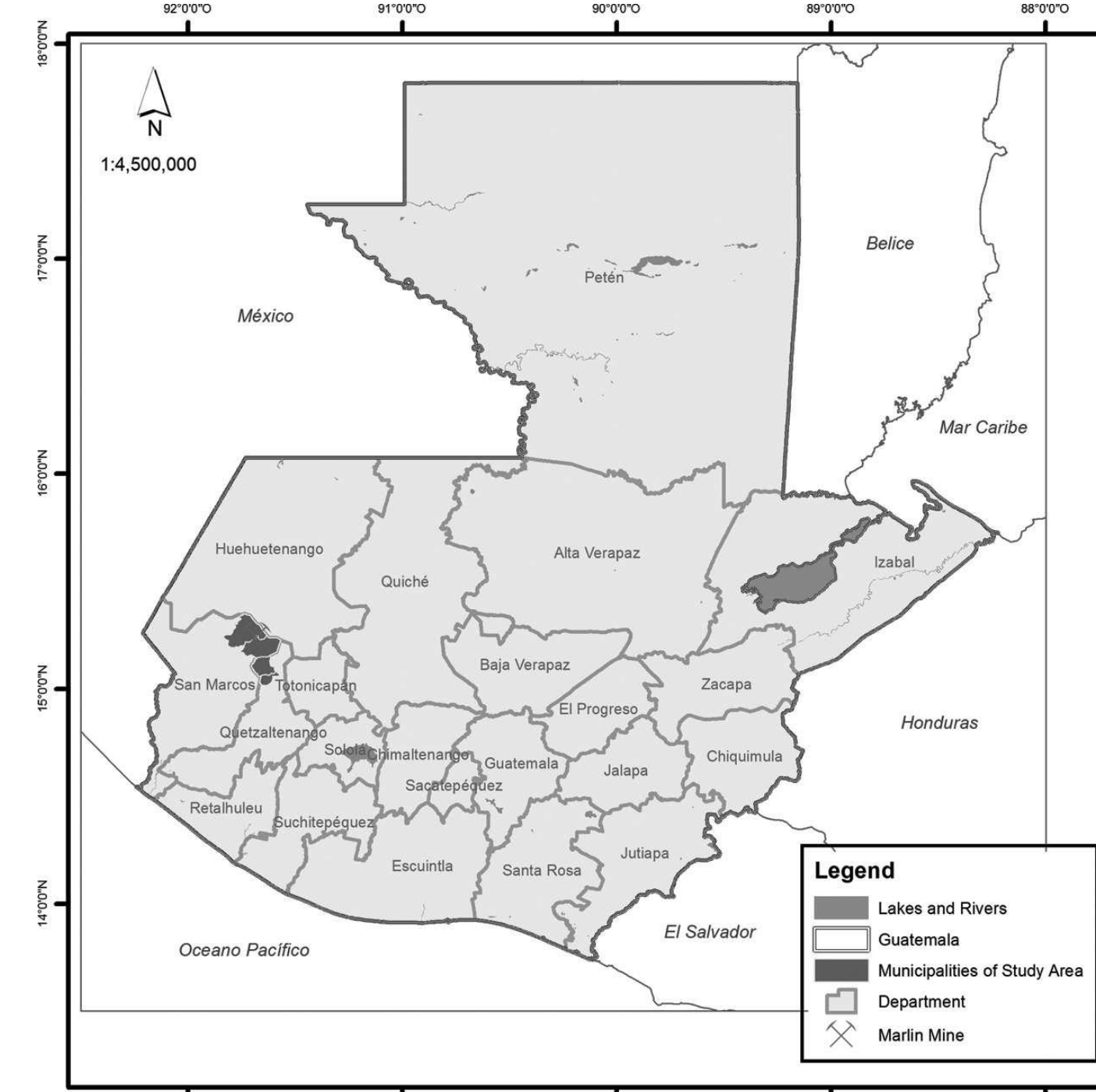
## Introduction and Context

Due to the nature of extractive industries and their need for natural resources, extractive development has disproportionately affected Indigenous communities. Yet little is known about the factors that determine whether Indigenous peoples welcome or oppose extractive development projects that affect their lands and resources; however, previous studies suggest that there is a link to the right to self-determination.

This research project explores the relationship between the Maya-Mam indigenous communities in the department of San Marcos, Guatemala, with the Canadian-based mining company, Goldcorp Inc. It is part of a larger study on the experiences of Wemindji, a community of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, Canada, with the Maya-Mam community of San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Guatemala. These two Indigenous peoples have had contrasting engagements with Goldcorp.



Mneina, E. (2014). FREDEMI members describe their experiences [Photograph]. San Miguel, Guatemala.



Map by Patricia Rojas (2013)  
Source Data: Instituto Geográfico Nacional de Guatemala  
Projection: Geographic coordinates  
Datum: WGS 84



Mneina, E. (2014). Sign in front of one community: "Community Resistance" [Photograph]. San Miguel, Guatemala.

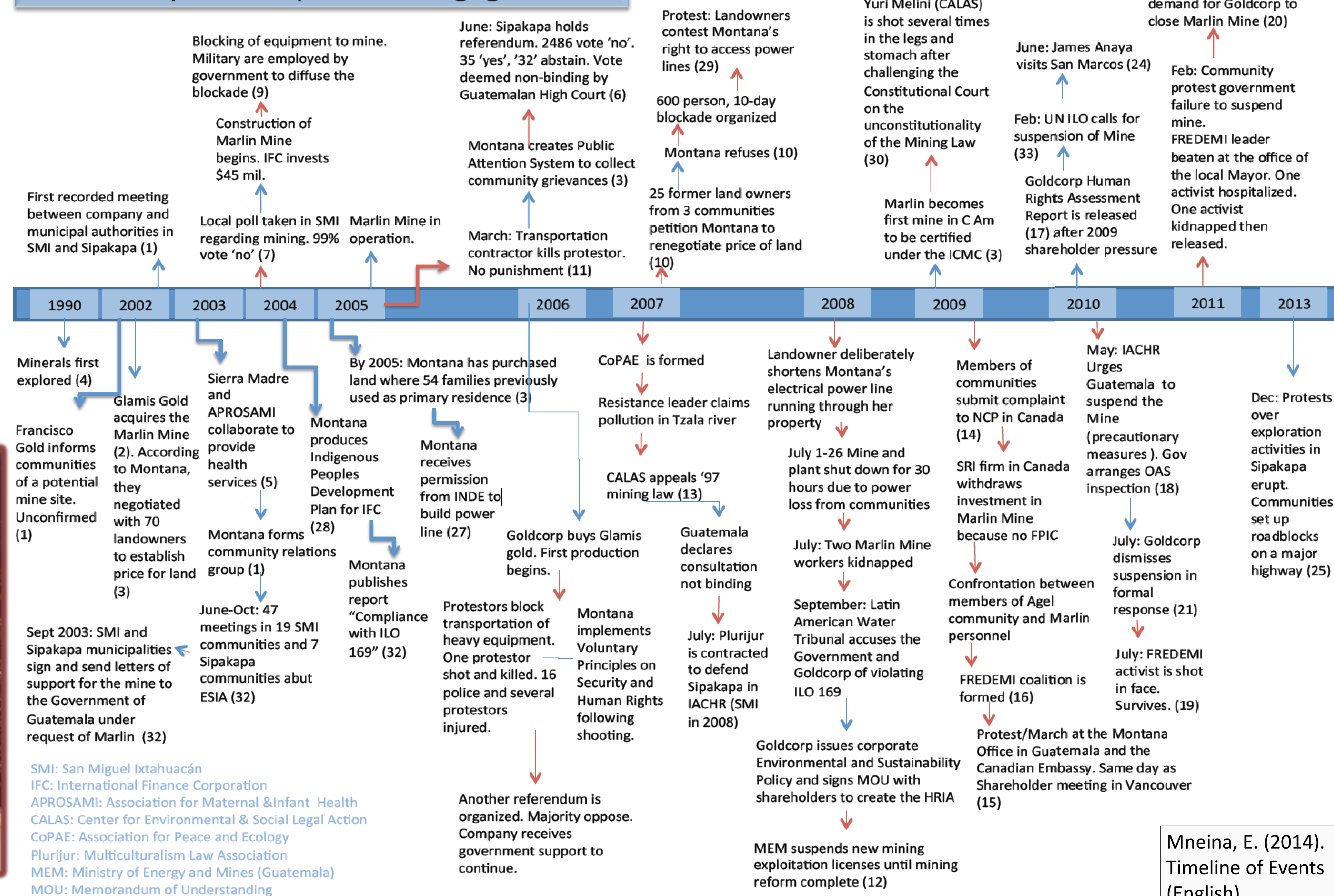
## Methodology

The methodology that will be employed throughout the research project includes documentary analysis, archival research, participatory ethnographic fieldwork, as well as dissemination of findings. The research team was involved in the initial stage of the ongoing project, and contributed by performing documentary analysis. More specifically, the team read through a wide range of existing publications relating to San Miguel and Goldcorp relations, and produced an extensive annotated bibliography on the existing literature. We identified key events and actors at the local, national, and international level, and compiled this information into two documents: a timeline of events and a map of actors. We also performed literature searches through library databases to find additional sources that were not already included in our initial bibliography. Additionally, the research team had the opportunity to present our findings so far towards the end of the semester, at a public screening of the documentary "Gold Fever".



Mneina, E. (2014). Woman and children in front of the house allegedly destroyed by underground explosives [Photograph]. San Miguel, Guatemala.

## Community and Corporation Engagement



Mneina, E. (2014). Timeline of Events (English).

## Conclusion

This initial analysis will be essential to the later parts of the research for several reasons. Firstly, while there was a vast array of existing literature on the situation in San Miguel, a lot of the information is contradictory and incomplete. Our timeline and list of actors were therefore imperative for a comprehensive understanding of the facts. Given the controversial nature of the relationship explored in this study, the ethnographic fieldwork portion of the research has a severe limitation: for the safety of the researchers and the community members in San Miguel, only information from Guatemalans who are against Goldcorp's Marlin Mine can be collected. Thus the literature review allows for a more balanced, unbiased perspective, including sources from both sides of the conflict.

## Significance

In their own right, the timeline and the list of actors that were compiled were beneficial to the communities of San Miguel and Sipacapa, as they were seeking a comprehensive understanding of how the mine has impacted their community, which NGOs and governmental organizations were involved, and which researchers have already done studies in their communities. Achieving a better understanding of Indigenous self-determination will be essential to engaging positively with these communities through development in the future.

## Acknowledgements

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