

Indigenous Opposition to Mining Activities in Latin America: A Comparison of Multi-Scalar Strategies in Guatemala, Panama, Colombia and Peru

Lesya M. Nakoneczny

Department of Geography, McGill University

Montréal, Québec, Canada

December 2011

Supervisor: Professor Oliver Coomes

Reader: Professor Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert

Indigenous people are often at the contested juncture between transnational mining companies, liberalized economies and local communities. This paper contributes to the understanding of the strategies and tactics employed by indigenous people in multi-scalar mining conflicts through a comparison of four cases in Guatemala, Panama, Colombia and Peru. A systemic review and analysis of grey and academic literature was undertaken to chronicle and detail the main strategies and tactics used by indigenous communities in these cases. Indigenous peoples use the multi-scalar strategies and tactics of (1) direct action, and (2) independent review and dispute mechanisms when opposing mining activities. These strategies are used to create and exploit opportunities at other scales. The direct action strategies of road blockades and demonstrations can be effectively used to gain short term concessions from other parties. Independent reviews and third party complaint processes work to establish opportunities for indigenous communities to engage with other parties in transnational forums.