
Indigenous social movements and international NGOs in the Peruvian Amazon

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Acronyms

ACPC – Asociación para la Conservación del Patrimonio del Cutivireni (*Association for the Cultural Protection of the Cutivireni Area*)

AIDSESP – Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (*Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle*)

CAAAP – Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica (*Amazonian Centre for Applied Anthropology and Practice*)

COMARU – Consejo Machiguenga del Rio Urubamba (*Machiguenga Council of the Urubamba River*)

CONAP – Confederación de las Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú (*Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities of Peru*)

CECONAMA – Central de Comunidades Nativas Matsiguengas (*Centre for Machiguenga Native Communities*)

CEDIA – Centro para el Desarrollo del Indígena Amazónico (*Centre for Amazonian Indigenous Development*)

CI – Conservation International

COICA – Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (*Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin*)

EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment

FECONAYY – Federación de Comunidades Nativas Yine Yami (*Federation for Yine Yami Native Communities*)

INGO – International non-governmental organisation

IDB – Inter-American Development Bank

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

PMAC – Programa de Monitoreo Ambiental Comunitario (*Community Environmental Monitoring Programme*)

RAP – Red Ambiental Peruana (*Peruvian Environmental Network*)

SIL – Summer Institute of Linguistics

SMO – Social movement organisation

TGP – Transportora de Gas del Peru (*Peruvian Gas Transporters*)

WWF – World Wildlife Fund

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Introduction

Overview of the report and research aims

The following report presents a detailed case study of an indigenous organisation based in the Peruvian Amazon and its relationships with international NGOs. The ethnic group that the organisation represents lives in an isolated region that harbours both high levels of biodiversity and significant reserves of natural gas. The study focuses on how the indigenous organisation attempts to represent the needs of its member communities in the face of threats to livelihood from the extractive activity of multinational energy companies on their territory, but also how it tries to negotiate support from conservation agencies and international NGOs to respond to these threats and its members' demands for greater levels of local development. The report tracks the organisation's progress as it develops its strategic repertoire of protest and collective action, and the response of international NGOs to the increasingly politicised situation at the local level. Finally, it examines attempts at collaboration between the international and local levels, particularly in the areas of biodiversity conservation, protected areas and high-level advocacy campaigns.

Although this study is focused on just one indigenous organisation, the authors believe that this report has relevance for a wider group of actors, beyond those involved in the specific region of the Peruvian Amazon. This report will have resonance for organisations concerned with large-scale extractive activity by international companies across the Amazon region, as well as for those that undertake advocacy activity on behalf of local indigenous and other grassroots groups. It discusses the policy issues concerned with creating partnerships between international NGOs and indigenous actors, and identifies the problems involved in international advocacy campaigns that attempt to bring together a diverse group of organisations. The study also presents a more theoretical discussion of the development of social movement-style tactics and the dynamics involved in international support for local level protest.

The starting point for this study was an exploration of the nature of social movements as an organisational form and how their characteristic behaviour might impact upon relationships with international non-governmental actors. It sought to address an area neglected within the study of NGOs, whilst simultaneously opening up debates in social movement theory. The inherent tendency of social movements towards dynamism and transformation is considered both a source of strength and a potential cause of their disintegration. Social movement theory has posited the inevitability of cooptation and formalisation of originally radical and localised social protest, as grassroots groups accept support from external actors. The research project aimed to explore the limits of this assumption through an analysis of the relationships of an indigenous social movement with international conservation NGOs. As such it intended to examine, through a case study, whether the aims of this particular movement had indeed been co-opted by more powerful, better connected global actors, or if conservationists had had to concede space to the demands of a group that employs a powerful rhetoric on rights to land, to development and the use of natural resources.

The project therefore aimed to generate greater understanding of how the priorities of international and local actors influence each other and impact upon organisational agendas. In order to generate understanding of these relationships, the project sought to trace the historical development of the indigenous groups' demands and discourse, examine the sites of potential conflict with conservation organisations, in particular over issues of indigenous rights and

biodiversity and, from this juncture, analyse attempts to find common ground. It was planned that the study would ask whether and how collaboration impacts upon movement mission, membership, activities and self-presentation.

As the research process progressed, it became clear that collaboration between the grassroots organisation and international conservation groups had not frequently manifested itself in concrete projects or activities, despite the fact that the area has extremely high levels of endemic biodiversity and is under very real threat from the exploration of energy resources. As a result, as well as examining cooperation to date, the researchers also sought to understand why international support for the organisation had not been more forthcoming.

This paper begins with an introduction to the Machiguenga people, the main ethnic group represented by COMARU, drawn from anthropological studies undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In particular, it focuses on aspects of Machiguenga organisation and community structure. This is followed by a section that gives the reader a brief overview of the context within which COMARU operates, touching on debates around conservation and indigenous organising at the national level as well as providing background information on energy extraction in Machiguenga territory. This section also highlights the interest of external non-governmental actors in the region. Developing this last theme, the report goes on to trace events in COMARU's history during which it has maintained a cautious distance from external organisations and details a couple of specific events during which attempts at collaboration have broken down. Noting more recent attempts at approximation on the part of international conservation organisations, the report turns to an examination of advocacy campaigns run from Washington DC and discusses the limits of this type of cooperation. Finally, through the use of a case study of public hearings on gas extraction, the report examines the impacts on COMARU of limited international support.

Methodology and research methods

This project was conceived as an organisational case study that would generate empirical knowledge of the nature and affects of collaboration between social movement organisations and international NGOs. The research is limited to a study of a single organisation, and as such no generalisation to populations can be made from the project's findings (Hamel 1993). However, those who use case study methods argue that theoretical inferences can be made from the research findings of a single case study (Gomm et al. 2000). Yin refers to the same idea as *analytical generalization*, in which a particular set of results are generalised to broader theory. In this way the investigator, through the case study, contributes to and expands theoretical debate (Yin 1994). Case study methodology also advocates the collection of a variety of different sorts of data and the use of thick description to provide sufficient empirical data from which to make theoretical inferences (Shofield 2000). The description and analysis of the relationship between an indigenous organisation and international NGOs presented in this paper through the lens of social movement theory, is intended to act as a catalyst for further research into the interaction of these two types of organisation, which is currently lacking in the literature.

In line with the above, the original methodology outlined plans for interviews with conservation and development organisations based in the UK, the United States and Peru, and consultation of reports and internal documents from these organisations, where possible. These interviews would assess the levels of their organisational collaboration with an indigenous peoples' organisation, COMARU, that operates in the Urubamba region of the Peruvian Amazon, working with communities of predominantly Machiguenga ethnicity. Findings from these interviews would be analysed alongside data gathered during fieldwork in the Lower Urubamba area. It was anticipated that the methods used with the Machiguenga would involve participatory exercises in communities, to assess the levels of awareness of and engagement with COMARU as an

organisation. It would also involve indepth interviews with COMARU leaders and activists, along with archival work in the headquarters of the organisation.

The first stages of UK-based research soon highlighted the need for a change in methodological approach. Machiguenga settlements are isolated, but also traditionally have very low population densities. Although in the communities of the Lower Urubamba there are now well established population centres, many of those who live there maintain garden plots elsewhere, and some families choose to live permanently at some distance from these centres. Calling community members together for a meeting is not without its difficulties. Furthermore, since the mid-1990s, the presence of energy companies in the region who are able to travel between communities by helicopter means that there has been heavy pressure on community members, both by the companies and the state, to participate in meetings, evaluation sessions, workshops and consultations. NGO staff visiting the region have also added to the number of demands for information through research studies, participatory needs assessments, focus groups and the like. The Machiguenga do not have a tradition of community meetings and are increasingly disillusioned by the apparent failure on the part of NGOs, the state and the companies to live up to the promises they make and the expectations that they create during these visits. Furthermore, a series of conflictual events that occurred during the first half of 2005 meant that by the time of the first fieldwork visit, in July 2005, the attitude towards NGOs, researchers, students and other external visitors in the Machiguenga communities of the Lower Urubamba was extremely cautious.

The difficulty of the terrain, the scarcity of transport options and the many commitments of COMARU's leadership, also called for a revision of fieldwork plans. After consultation with members of the advisory group that have extensive experience in the region, the researchers concluded that it would not be possible to carry out systematic interviews with activists or participatory focus group discussions with Machiguenga communities in the Lower Urubamba. Instead, it was decided that greater focus would be placed on research within COMARU and that the majority of fieldwork would be undertaken at its headquarters. In order to be able to make a visit to the member communities, it was decided that the researchers would accompany COMARU leaders on a trip scheduled as part of the organisation's strategic plan and that they would attend community meetings as participant observers. As such, in order to build up trust and simultaneously gather data about the organisation, the researchers assisted COMARU at their headquarters in the town of Quillabamba for a total of four weeks, after which a two week visit to communities was made. They worked with the leadership on a number of urgent strategic assignments and with the administrative staff on reporting. This also meant that the researchers were given access to internal documents, reports and project proposals.

The difficult local circumstances and the change in research methods also meant an alteration to the methodological approach. Without systematic interviewing in communities, it would not be possible to engage in a thorough theoretical discussion around the nature of the indigenous organisation's relationship with its members. The discovery that, despite website claims to the contrary, very few NGOs (Peruvian or international) had a significant working partnership with COMARU, also meant that a change of research emphasis was necessary. The nature of the relationship between the researchers and the leadership of COMARU led to a situation in which the latter would express openly their frustration with the lack of support from international institutions, and their expectation that the researchers would in some manner be able to improve these links and the functioning of networks around the gas extraction issue. As a result, the researchers' approach took on elements of action research methodology. The approach to data gathering and analysis within this tradition is geared towards problem solving and can be considered applied research (Stringer 1999; Greenwood and Levin 1988). This methodological focus informs part of this case study, in that the researchers took the problem posed by the leadership (of the lack of external support) as a starting point for further investigation within the

overall study of the organisation. In this way, the researchers sought both to understand the roots of COMARU's relative isolation as an organisation, and possible ways to improve its networks and working relationships with both international NGOs and its own member communities. This investigation complements the more theoretical discussion around COMARU's recent adoption of more protest-focused activities and the impacts of its limited collaboration with international actors.

The case study of the indigenous organisation therefore evolved from a projected examination of the effects of collaboration between international NGO and indigenous movements, with equal study afforded to the impacts on all the different actors involved (movement leaders and activists, the membership base and international partners), to a study with a greater focus on the indigenous organisation, and specifically on the problems it faces in garnering support for its activities. The following discussion could be accused of being one-sided in this respect, but we would argue that within the literature on organisational partnerships, particularly between NGOs and grassroots organisations, the view from 'South' to 'North' is not privileged, due to issues of access, political sensitivity and greater resource expenditure. This report attempts to redress this balance by examining in close detail the pressures faced by a representative organisation as it attempts to negotiate multiple international and national alliances. Furthermore, there is limited academic debate around the relationships between NGOs and, specifically, organisations that are involved in protest (Hilhorst 2003; Fisher 1997). This research study makes a contribution in this area by examining how protest influences the dynamics of relationships between international and grassroots actors.

Research timetable

The project began in March 2005, with the first fieldwork visit in July 2005. The researchers spent approximately three weeks in Lima undertaking interviews with representatives from Peruvian NGOs and with staff in the country offices of international NGOs. They also interviewed the leaders of indigenous federations, spoke with academics and other observers of the situation in the Lower Urubamba, and carried out archival research. The researchers then travelled to Quillabamba where they spent two weeks working with COMARU in its headquarters and consulting the organisation's documented history. The co-researcher spent a further two weeks in Quillabamba before making a two week visit to six communities in the Lower Urubamba. This visit was undertaken with the leader of the organisation, and a female member of the executive committee.

Although this first fieldwork visit was lengthened once the sensitivity of the climate at the time and the logistical difficulties involved in travelling to communities was assessed, it was decided to undertake a second, shorter, visit the following year, in order to present research findings to interested stakeholders, and carry out follow-up interviews. The aim was also to investigate if and how international organisations had adapted their attitude towards work with indigenous groups over the past year – particularly since an influential and highly critical article, published in late 2004, had condemned the general approach towards indigenous peoples taken by the largest international conservation NGOs, a number of which also claim to have a presence in the Camisea region. This second fieldwork visit also included a four day stop-off for both researchers in Washington DC en route to Lima. This was arranged as initial investigation had shown that the most influential organisations associated with COMARU were based in the US, and that not all of them had offices or representatives in Peru. The researchers spent one week undertaking follow-up interviews with organisations in Lima before making a visit to COMARU headquarters in Quillabamba, where they briefed COMARU staff on the progress of the research and gathered information on events and activities that had occurred since the last visit.

Timetable overview

March–June 2005: Preparation of literature review and planning for first fieldwork visit

July 2005: Interview and archival work in Lima

August–September 2005: Fieldwork with COMARU in Quillabamba headquarters and six communities in the Lower Urubamba

October 2005–June 2006: Preparation of research report and planning for second fieldwork visit

July 2006: Visit to Washington, DC. Follow-up interviews and feedback sessions with research participants in Lima and Quillabamba

August–November 2006: Final report write-up

The case of COMARU

This study took as its focus COMARU, the Consejo Machiguenga del Rio Urubamba (the Machiguenga Council of the Urubamba River), which is located in the Southeastern Peruvian Amazon, La Convencion province, in the department of Cusco. This organisation was identified as an appropriate case study because of the proximity of the indigenous communities affiliated with the organisation to the Camisea gas fields, where international energy companies have been intermittently involved in exploratory and then extractive activities since the mid 1980s. Coupled with this is the interest of the major international conservation organisations in the region (the tropical Andes) because of its high levels of biodiversity, endemic species and relative ‘pristine’ condition. The situation in the Urubamba region is such that COMARU routinely deals with a range of external actors, demonstrating differing priorities and agendas. As a result, it was felt that an examination of COMARU would give an insight into the impact of these relationships on its organisation form and activities.

COMARU is a membership organisation to which thirty communities in the Urubamba valley are affiliated. Of these 12 are in the area known as the Bajo (or Lower) Urubamba, and 18 are in the Alto (or Upper) Urubamba. The river Urubamba runs downstream from Cusco in the highlands, but the Upper area to which ‘Alto Urubamba’ refers is limited to the geographical area between the community of Kiteni and the Pongo de Manique.² COMARU’s member communities have a predominantly Machiguenga population apart from Sensa, whose residents are of Yine Yami ethnicity, formerly known as Piro, and Puerto Rico, which is Ashaninka. Both of these are in the Lower Urubamba. COMARU was formed in 1989 with seven member communities, but not officially registered until 1991. Whilst it is the only indigenous organisation present in the Upper Urubamba, the Lower Urubamba is the base for a second Machiguenga organisation, CECONAMA (Central de Comunidades Nativas Matsiguengas – Centre for Machiguenga Native Communities) and a Yine Yami organisation FECONAYY (Federación de Comunidades Nativas Yine Yami – Federation for Yine Yami Native Communities). CECONAMA was founded prior to COMARU in the early 1980s but is smaller, with only eight communities affiliated to it. Broadly speaking, the division between the two Machiguenga organisations (COMARU and CECONAMA) originally ran upon religious lines. The communities affiliated to COMARU were initially under greater influence from the Dominican Mission in the area, whilst the formation of CECONAMA had been encouraged by the evangelical group known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, or Instituto Lingüístico del Verano (no longer operational in Peru). However, some communities have switched allegiance, others choose not to ally themselves formally to either and a number attend meetings of both.

One of the main problems facing COMARU and other organisations or enterprises wishing to work in the region is the difficulty of access. Whilst some communities in the Upper Urubamba are

² A series of fast-flowing rapids that form a natural barrier between the Upper and Lower Urubamba and have kept the lower area in relative isolation for many thousands of years.

accessible by road, a number can be reached on foot only, and are several days' walk away. Communities along the Lower Urubamba are accessible by river, although in the dry season those in the headwaters again can only be reached on foot. The communities in the Lower Urubamba remained virtually isolated for hundreds of years by the natural barrier of the Pongo de Manique. It is for this reason that contact with national society was extremely limited prior to the 1970s, apart from the presence of Dominican priests who began working in the area in the early twentieth century. Even today, they exist with minimal public services: communities are not linked to national power supplies and rely on generators or solar panels for electricity; drinking water is fetched from rivers, which are increasingly polluted; healthcare provision is minimal and education continues to be run by the Dominican Mission.

According to its statutes that were revised in 1999, the aims of COMARU are to:

- represent its affiliated communities at local, regional, national and international levels
- defend communities' interests and rights
- work to protect the territorial integrity and natural resources of each community whilst respecting their autonomy
- channel community demands and initiatives to the appropriate body
- disseminate information and decisions relevant to community interests and to promote their economic, social and cultural development.

COMARU provides support to its affiliated native communities and, on request, will support any other native community, (Machiguenga or of other ethnicity) within its geographical area.

The strategic objectives of the organisation, within its overall remit, were revised in a participatory process in 2004 in which representatives and delegates from all of COMARU's affiliated communities took part. The objectives are to:

- make significant improvements to the educational achievement of Machiguenga women and men so as to equal national averages for educational achievement
- achieve full legal registration of all Machiguenga territories and communities
- stop indiscriminate logging and promote reforestation
- ensure the full realisation of indigenous rights to ancestral lands, as well as to autonomy, indigenous self-determination and jurisdiction, economic development with identity, and culturally appropriate education and health, as set out in national law and Convention 169 of the ILO
- achieve appropriate and sustainable management of natural resources, in terms of both flora and fauna, as the basis for development with [indigenous] identity.

The extent to which COMARU is able to fulfil its role as set out in its statutes is limited for a number of reasons, as will be discussed in this paper. Whilst the movement is not generally described by its leadership as a 'social movement organisation', during 2005 COMARU became involved in increasingly belligerent and politicised activities that warrant examination within the framework of social movement theory.

The Machiguenga³

It is thought that direct ancestors of the Machiguenga were living in the headwaters of the Madre de Dios and Urubamba rivers up to four or five thousand years ago (Johnson 2003). Occupying approximately the same territory at the time of the Spanish conquest as they are today, they were the Amazonian Indians closest to the Inca court at Cuzco. The Incas knew them as 'Anti' but never dominated them. The Machiguenga developed some limited trade with the Inca but maintained only sporadic contact with outside groups, up until the rubber boom that began in the mid nineteenth century which had a particular impact on the Machiguenga of the Upper Urubamba (Rosengren 1987a). Dominican missionaries first began working with the Machiguenga in the Madre de Dios area in 1902 (Gray 1997), and other mission groups have since followed into nearby regions. In particular, the Summer Institute of Linguistics was active in the region for approximately 25 years, up until the mid-1980s, studying the language so as to produce a vernacular version of the Bible. The missionaries encouraged the Machiguenga to live in established settlements, rather than on their isolated family plots. Anthropologists living in the area in the early 1980s noted that the establishment of schools had, to a limited extent, encouraged this type of more settled living pattern in Shimaa and Koribeni on the Upper Urubamba, although families often maintained other homes elsewhere, outside of the settlements, and this practice continues throughout the area today.

Although it was originally argued that the Machiguenga were once living in much larger settlements and that they had dispersed as a result of unwanted contact or aggression from other groups (notably the Piro/Yine), scholars have since debunked this theory and it is now generally accepted that the Machiguenga have always lived in very small, family level groupings, with some limited contact with extended family members through household visits. This is reflected in the fact that before the arrival of the missionaries and the establishment of settlements around schools, people referred to each other by kinship terms only. Names were not necessary where the numbers involved in social interaction were so limited.

Since the 1970s and the Peruvian state's introduction of local level self-governing bodies known as *Comunidades Nativas* (literally 'Native Communities'), this pattern has begun to change. Two key anthropological texts based on experiences in the Upper Urubamba in the early 1980s provide a very useful account of traditional Machiguenga societal practices, and how these were beginning to adapt to the imposition of the *Comunidad Nativa* structure. In particular, the establishment of schools was beginning to draw families towards the more settled areas, although even today, some families will leave for more distant *chacras* or garden plots once term has finished.

Johnson (2003) has labelled the Machiguenga a family level society. And indeed, the livelihood strategies of swidden agriculture, game hunting and fishing, suggest the need for low-level population densities. He stresses the individualism of the Machiguenga, and how children are taught from a young age that they have the right to behave as they please, but that they must be responsible for their own actions. Rosengren (1987a) also refers to their 'fierce independence'. His study looks closely at settlement patterns, visiting practices and social interaction, and concludes that social interaction is generally limited to members of the immediate family and that the Machiguenga come together as a 'community' only very rarely. One reason to do so is for fishing with barbasco (poison) that requires some form of joint working, although he sees people involved in this for their individual gain, and believes it should be interpreted as 'co-incidence' rather than cooperation. Johnson records occasional communal feasting with cassava beer drinking.

³ Other spellings of the term exist, including 'Matsigenka', but the hispanised version employed in this study is used most widely.

Rosengren argues that it is only in times of perceived threat that the communities come together. This in the past has been in response to the danger of attack from other indigenous groups and is generally the only occasion upon which the Machiguenga choose a formal leader. In general, however, the Machiguenga avoid conflict; if one family or a member of it feels that they can no longer live near to another, the strategy is generally to move away. It is anyway a traditional part of Machiguenga livelihood strategy that families begin to prepare and then move to a new swidden or *chacra* every four to five years.

These traditional patterns of settlement and social interaction have obvious implications for the attempts by the missionaries, and then the Peruvian government to encourage a more permanently settled way of life for the Machiguenga. Rosengren's analysis looks at traditional forms of leadership in Machiguenga communities in the early 1980s, and how this fits, or indeed jars, with the establishment of Comunidades Nativas and their constituent authorities. He notes that although Machiguenga society appears highly atomistic, 'below the anarchic surface there are relations that keep the local groups of people together' (Rosengren 1987a: 336). While traditionally Machiguenga communities have not had formal leaders, particular male members of residence groups (made up of nearby family groups) can command a certain amount of prestige and respect from other individuals.

Even though there are no native formal leadership positions today some men may take advantage of their reputations for knowledge to create for themselves very influential positions. These informal leaders all belong to the category of male heads of clusters of related households, generally formed around a core of matrilaterally related households. The male heads of these clusters commonly stand in a father-in-law position to the subordinate male household heads in either a strictly genealogical sense or through genealogical fictions. Thus, although the superior position of the informal leaders is claimed to be an outcome of their superior knowledge, in the end their power positions rest on and are maintained by their control over women (Rosengren 1997a: 335).

The extent to which these individuals could impose their will upon others, however, was extremely limited. Rosengren notes that those elected to the post of Comunidad Nativa chief in the early 1980s were often those without a great deal of prestige, and could be ignored or even ridiculed when they attempted to mobilise or sanction other residents. However, the introduction of the Comunidades Nativas had begun to make the Machiguenga more sedentary and, as he notes, a type of community loyalty had formed around football when it was played against outsiders. He also records a more recent incident where the community mobilised against a perceived external threat (as they had done against attacks from other indigenous groups in the past). This episode involved a community in the Lower Urubamba that forcibly removed a settler or *colono* who was farming land without permission, and had been attempting to establish a commercial entity.

Despite this, his concluding remarks reinforce the view that settlement groups do not engage in lasting formal relations with other similar counterparts. Relations between them are 'always constructed on an individual level by way of marriage and migration' (Rosengren 1987a: 349). He goes on to note that settlement groups will only unite in case of external threat.

In contrast to other indigenous peoples in the area, Rosengren concludes that

the ethnic group is for the Matsigenka of no importance in relation to the actual social groups and the Matsigenka have accordingly never acted or functioned as a united group. Attempts have been made by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) to create a Matsigenka Nation representing all Matsigenkas. This organization is, however, recognized only in a few SIL-influenced CNs along the lower Urubamba and its domain of

authority is limited. Its only mandate emanates from the SIL, and, furthermore, it aspires to regulate many of the relations with non-natives that were formerly regulated by decisions taken by individuals. The organization is thus regarded as interfering with the right of every individual to make his own decision. Many tend to disregard entirely the advice of the Nation. Along the Upper Urubamba River the Matsigenka Nation is not only unrecognized, it is unknown. The most inclusive level unit operates, consequently, as a single-purpose organization - and this one purpose is defense. In regard to other aspects, more exclusive groups act independently and no overriding organization is allowed to interfere in their affairs (Rosengren 1987a:350-51).

Rosengren develops his analysis of settlement patterns and leadership in his full ethnography of the Machiguenga community that he studied. He repeats the conclusion that unification even amongst settlements is very rare and that the notion of common ethnic identity across them is non-existent. However, he is forced to acknowledge in a footnote, that by 1985 a body based on ethnicity had been formed.

In 1985 a Matsigenka Federation was formed in the Upper Urubamba area by representatives from all of the Matsigenka *Comunidades Nativas* there (Rosengren 1997b: 156 FN11).

No further information is given, but it would appear that the organisation referred to was the forerunner of today's COMARU, and was set up in response to a colonist invasion on Machiguenga territory. It would suggest that by the 1980s the impact of external actors arriving in the region was beginning to be sufficient to spur the Machiguenga out of their family level isolation, and to draw on the discourse of common indigenous identity. In an interview for this study, a representative of the NGO CEDIA who began to work in the area at this time, noted that the Machiguenga could see the benefits of working together as a 'community' in order to establish land titles that would protect their resources.⁴ The discussion above of Machiguenga cultural traits, livelihoods and social interaction drawn from anthropological studies undertaken in the early 1980s has implications for the way in which Machiguenga political organisation and its interaction with the outside world have developed.

⁴ Interview with Lelis Rivera, August 2006.

The context within which COMARU operates

Within a relatively short space of time since Rosengren formulated his conclusions, much has changed for the Machiguenga organisation. Although COMARU is a local level grassroots indigenous organisation, it has a dense network of relationships with actors at regional, national and international levels. It interacts with national and international NGOs, national and international indigenous federations, district, provincial and national state bodies, national universities, religious missions and multinational energy corporations. COMARU staff and leaders are under constant pressure to respond to demands for information, consultation and meetings from many of these different actors. Since the mid 1990s, and the consolidation of plans to extract gas from the Camisea fields, the region has become one of considerable national and international interest. As a result COMARU finds itself operating in an increasingly complex and multilayered environment. This section will attempt to provide the background to the work and activities of COMARU in the local, national and international context.

Gas extraction in Camisea

The gas fields referred to as 'Camisea' are located in the South Eastern Peruvian Amazon in the basin of the lower Urubamba river. Natural gas was first detected there in 1978 (CECONAMA et al. 2003) and the first area where gas extraction has gone on-stream is encompassed by Block 88, one of the energy concessions granted by the Peruvian government. Block 88 is situated around the Camisea river, a tributary of the lower Urubamba and extends into a reserve for isolated indigenous peoples. Block 56 is adjacent to the northwest. After prospecting work in the mid 1990s, reserves were estimated by Shell geologists at 11 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 610 million barrels of liquid gas (Chatterjee 1997). Exploration by energy companies in the Camisea area first began in the mid 1980s, but it was not until August 2004 that gas extraction in Block 88 finally came on-stream. From the extraction platforms, natural and liquid natural gas is transported in two pipelines across the Andes to Lima. The pipeline carrying the liquids terminates in Paracas where there is a terminal from which the liquids are exported. The gas pipeline terminates in Lima for distribution in the Lima metropolitan area. From Lima a branch pipeline goes to the coast near Cañete where a liquefying plant is being built. Currently, the same energy consortium, named simply Camisea (a consortium of Argentinean, Texan, Korean and Algerian companies) is preparing to exploit the nearby concession Block 56.

The first energy company to make significant explorations in the Camisea region was Shell. Prospecting for oil in the mid 1980s, it left in 1986 after only natural gas was found and the company was unable to strike a deal with the Peruvian government (Chatterjee 1997). Despite the fact that Shell left having decided not to go ahead with extraction, the very presence of workers and contractors had a significant impact on the region. Whilst the companies currently in the region refer only to the destruction wrought by loggers who entered the region after Shell had left using their access roads (www.camsea.com.pe), numerous other sources attest to the decimation of the Nahua population by diseases introduced by Shell workers, along with practices that jeopardised the natural environment.

By the time Shell returned with Mobil in the mid 1990s to investigate the commercial potential of natural gas extraction and transportation by pipeline, much had changed in the international arena that prevented the company from operating as it had in the previous decade. The destruction and suffering caused by Texaco in the Ecuadorian Oriente, the high profile law suit against the company by the indigenous people affected, the international disgust at Shell's operations in Ogoniland, Nigeria (Chatterjee 1997), and a better prepared Peruvian civil society (Boyd 2000) meant that Shell was under pressure to show the world that it had improved its operations.

Opinion amongst the environmental lobby is divided over the research and consultation process that followed in which, along with environmental and social impact studies, Shell consulted with Peruvian sociologists, anthropologists, international and Peruvian NGOs, as well as representatives of local indigenous groups, in order to establish its working practices, were it to go ahead with gas extraction. The Peru office of WWF UK was criticised for its involvement with Shell, and the consultations it facilitated have been described by an observer as 'seriously truncated'. In their defence, a former WWF staff member involved at the time believes the process to be one of the best examples of good practice for an energy company in terms of engagement with national civil society and sensitivity towards the rights and demands of local indigenous people and the natural environment.

The main concessions achieved by the indigenous people of the region (representatives of COMARU, CECONAMA and FECONAYY were consulted) were that no roads would be built (which would otherwise facilitate the entry of loggers and land hungry peasant settlers, *colonos*, into their territory) and that workers' camps would be self-contained so that interaction with communities would be minimised. Shell agreed to this 'off-shore' policy in which all equipment would be flown in by helicopter or transported by barge along the river systems. Further, as a consequence of WWF's and others' negotiations, Shell agreed not to take its operations into the Manu National Park, even though Block 88 encroaches upon it, and as such they had the right to do so. Shell also vaccinated staff against diseases that might prove a risk to local indigenous groups (Chatterjee 1997). According to a WWF source, at one point during the negotiations three Machiguenga leaders were flown to London for a meeting with Shell. With the energy company out of the room, WWF staff asked the Machiguenga whether they wanted Shell to take up the concession. Their response was positive, in that they were convinced that were Shell to leave, the Fujimori government would sell the concession to someone else, and that Shell at least appeared to be taking their concerns seriously. They doubted if all energy companies would behave in the same fashion.⁵

However, in 1998 Shell (with Mobil) again pulled out of Peru, without going ahead with the proposed gas extraction. As Notisur (1998) recorded at the time,

On July 24 [1998], Amazon Indian leaders told President Fujimori that the pullout of the two oil giants may threaten their homeland. Indian leaders had spent two years negotiating with Shell and had won unprecedented environmental promise. They worry that, if new companies take over, they might destroy the jungle.

It is not entirely clear why Shell decided to abandon the Camisea project, although according to Boyd (2000) it was because 'of a dispute with the Peruvian Government over gas distribution rights and tariffs'. Similar reasons are given in Notisur (1998). After Shell left, the concession was acquired in 2000 by the Camisea consortium, led by the Argentinean PlusPetrol in conjunction with the Texan firm Hunt Oil (primarily responsible for the construction of a gas liquification plant near Cañete, Lima) SK Corporation and Tecpetrol. Another consortium, Transportadora de Gas del Perú (TGP), in which PlusPetrol and Hunt Oil also have a stake, took over the responsibility for the building and maintenance of the two pipelines. Whilst the Camisea consortium has agreed to the 'off-shore' policy and enclosed camps, the environmental and indigenous rights lobbies both in Peru and overseas have reported numerous violations concerning contact with isolated groups, spills of diesel fuel and breach of air and river traffic controls, amongst others. As the same WWF source noted, they do not appear to have the same commitment nor the resources to find the best solution for local indigenous groups. Boyd (2000) notes similarly that the Argentinean company PlusPetrol, that leads on the extraction activities within the consortium, does not have a high public profile and is consequently less interested in environmental issues.

⁵ Telephone interview with former WWF employee, May 2005.

Fieldwork research for this study suggests, however, that it is with TGP that people in the area are experiencing most problems, both due to their attitude towards indigenous rights and their deplorable safety record. (At the time of writing the pipeline had ruptured five times, twice in the Urubamba region, causing spills of liquid gas and consequent environmental damage).

Local level indigenous organisation in Peru

The problems faced daily by Machiguenga communities in the Urubamba since the development of the gas fields began has led to a massively increased role for their principal representative organisation, COMARU. Officially registered in 1991, and with an update of its statutes in 1999, COMARU has steadily increased its membership from seven communities in its early years, to the current membership of thirty. However, compared to other indigenous organisations that represent specific ethnic groups in the Amazon, it is a late developer. For example, the Aguaruna federation was already active in the early 1980s, and was involved in lobbying activities based out of its offices in Lima, as well as developing service provision programmes for its territories, including health posts and cooperatives. Furthermore, the Aguaruna, along with the Ashaninka, had taken the lead in creating AIDSEP as the national representative body. Meanwhile, in Ecuador, many indigenous groups were similarly well-established, notably the Shuar federation.

Ethnographic work from the late 1970s and early 1980s gives some indication as to why there were no attempts by the Machiguenga to form their own organisation earlier or to join an indigenous federation. It is likely a result of their geographic isolation, traditionally very low levels of interfamilial interaction and the absence of an obvious external threat to livelihoods. Furthermore, the Dominican mission, which has a long presence in the area, has not generally encouraged indigenous organisation. The formation of COMARU was preceded by that of the other Machiguenga organisation in the Urubamba, CECONAMA, but both were encouraged to form by external actors. CECONAMA arose amongst communities who were influenced by the evangelical mission, the Summer Institute of Linguistics. COMARU on the other hand, is generally considered (including by the organisations themselves) to have been the 'child' of CEDIA (Centro para el Desarrollo del Indígena Amazónico – Centre for Amazonian Indigenous Development) a Peruvian NGO working in the region for the past twenty-five years. CEDIA encouraged communities not affiliated with CECONAMA to organise (some would argue as a counterweight to it). At the time, CEDIA was involved in emergency land titling work, as government policies were encouraging migration to the region from the mountainous areas, and indigenous communities were suffering the impacts of invasion by colonists on their land.

Despite the fact that CECONAMA was established earlier, COMARU has evolved as both the largest Machiguenga organisation and the most active and influential organisation in the Camisea region generally, as a simple comparison of recent activities and achievements with those of CECONAMA and FECONAYY will attest. According to the former head of COMARU, some CECONAMA communities now wish to join COMARU, having witnessed the way in which it supports its members. Up until a change of leadership in August 2005, CECONAMA had been virtually dormant for several years, and its chief had been accused of mismanaging funds from the energy consortium, supposedly for the construction of a head office. The meeting in which the head of CECONAMA resigned was the first the organisation had held in a year.⁶ COMARU holds at least three general assemblies and approximately three training workshops a year at its headquarters in Quillabamba, as well as hosting workshops run by various state bodies.

COMARU has received financing from Oxfam since its inception. Funds for the construction of the original headquarters, the Casa Machiguenga, came from Oxfam GB and it is now supported by Oxfam America. For the past ten years, COMARU has received a steadily increasing flow of

⁶ Interview with CEDIA staff, Lima, July 2005.

funds. However, whilst constant, resources are only sufficient to cover the operating costs of the organisation. For example, in 2004-05 programmatic work was limited to two community visits per year by the leaders of COMARU, and a series of three workshops held in Quillabamba for 45 delegates.

While COMARU received US\$45 000 for programme work and some overhead costs from Oxfam for 2004-05, in 2003 the organisation negotiated a grant worth US\$105 000 from the energy consortium, PlusPetrol, for enlargement of the Casa Machiguenga and scholarships for university students (COMARU 2005). The decision to take money from the company is one that has caused a polemic. However, as will be discussed later, COMARU fought to remove a particular clause from the agreement before accepting the funds. In August 2005, COMARU finalised negotiations with PlusPetrol for a second grant, worth US\$70 000, used to pay off outstanding debts and to finish the improvements to the headquarters.

The attitude towards extractive industries, and the decision taken by indigenous organisations as to whether or not to enter into financial agreements with them (beyond compensation or indemnification for individual communities), generates divisive arguments across Peru and is one of the principal points of departure between the two national level federations of Amazonian indigenous groups. So, whilst the split between COMARU and CECONAMA is partly on religious grounds (for example, in a couple of communities that are not formally affiliated, sympathies towards the organisations is dependent upon the religious persuasion of the current chief or *jefe*) there is also political division. COMARU has been affiliated with the national level indigenous federation AIDSESEP since 2001 while CECONAMA is affiliated to another national level federation, CONAP. The difference of approach regarding the sale of natural resources and the attitude towards multinational corporations held by the national level federations is also visible at the local level in the Urubamba valley in the relationships of CECONAMA and COMARU to PlusPetrol and TGP. COMARU maintains a considerably more critical attitude towards the company, as will be discussed below.

National and international level indigenous federations

AIDSESEP, Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle) was founded in 1979. It emerged in response to rising levels of local and regional indigenous organisation, in particular amongst the Ashaninka, Amuesha and Aguaruna peoples, that was developing into a national level indigenous consciousness (AIDSESEP 2003). It is considered to be more belligerent than the other Amazonian indigenous federation, CONAP, Confederación de las Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú (Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities of Peru) in its dealings with the State and private business, and has an uneasy relationship with national and international NGOs. Editorials in the 2004 edition of AIDSESEP's magazine, *Voz Indígena*, categorise environmentalist NGOs in the same group as missionaries and tour companies, all of which are working against the interests of indigenous peoples, and further suggests that they are linked to the interests of bio-prospecting firms (AIDSESEP 2004). In June 2004, AIDSESEP denounced a number of international conservation NGOs, including the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International (CI), for attempting to create protected areas and parks on indigenous lands in the Alto Purús, and for misinforming indigenous groups into agreeing to these plans. These international NGOs stood accused of trying to further their own control over indigenous territory, and of assisting their financial backers in their plans to exploit natural resources in the Amazon (COICA 2005). However, whilst in 2004 AIDSESEP denounced these organisations, in 2005 it was in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with WWF to work on issues of territory (involving mapping and legal title), natural resource management in forested areas, indigenous rights and education. Indeed, according to a representative of WWF, the two organisations first signed an

agreement in 2002 for specific project work, and have been gradually negotiating increased and more general institutional support since that time.⁷

AIDSESP's attitudes towards extraction in general and the Camisea project in particular are also somewhat ambiguous. In 2003, after a visit by AIDSESP representatives to the Urubamba region, a declaration was released in conjunction with other national and transnational indigenous federations, and also signed by COMARU. This declaration called for all preparatory work on concession Block 88 to cease, and for contracting firms to leave the area whilst a series of changes were made to the scope and management of the project (AIDSESP et al. 2003). Demands included a reassessment by external experts of whether extraction could be brought on-stream inside a nearby reserve for indigenous people (known as the Nahua-Kugapakori Reserve) without violation of human rights, as well as greater indigenous control over the running and monitoring of the project. Sources close to COMARU suggest that this was a more extreme position than the Machiguenga organisation wanted to take, and that AIDSESP representatives and the NGO workers that accompanied them had their own, more radical agenda towards extractive industries in mind.⁸ Other AIDSESP statements on the Camisea project from the same year are more ambiguous: while they call for the withdrawal of energy companies currently on indigenous lands, they also demand adequate consultation processes with indigenous peoples prior to the granting of future concessions (AIDSESP 2003). They also draw attention to the negative impacts on health and socio-economic wellbeing of Machiguenga and other groups, including uncontacted peoples living in the area affected by the Camisea project (AIDSESP 2003b). The somewhat contradictory nature of AIDSESP declarations makes it difficult to draw any sound conclusions as to their attitude towards extraction in general, although there is a consistent call for indigenous consent, management and control over extractive activities on ancestral land.⁹

COMARU is in the difficult position of representing a large number of indigenous Comunidades Nativas, most of which are anxious to benefit from a certain level of what they term *development*: electricity, drinking water, health and education. Many individuals within the communities are also keen to undertake paid work for the companies – one of the only sources of remunerated employment in the area, where the economy has become increasingly monetarised over the past decade. COMARU seeks to strike a balance through a policy of 'development with [indigenous] identity', an approach also supported by AIDSESP (2004b). However, maintaining this nuanced approach draws criticism from more radical actors.

The declaration discussed above (AIDSESP et al. 2003) gave an opportunity for the rival federation CONAP, along with its Machiguenga affiliate CECONAMA, to publish a response in which they branded AIDSESP and its cosignatories as anti-developmental and unpatriotic (CECONAMA et al. 2003). This is a criticism commonly directed against both AIDSESP and COMARU when they voice opposition to the extraction of natural resources by external agents on indigenous territories. CONAP was set up in 1987 by a group of anthropologists who had quarrelled with AIDSESP as the federation grew increasingly independent, able to work autonomously and less responsive to external agendas. CONAP is generally considered to be 'pro-development' when compared to AIDSESP's more cautious approach. According to the director of CONAP, the organisation seeks to stimulate indigenous economic development and improve the livelihoods of its affiliated organisations and members by securing the best deals on

⁷ Interview at WWF, Lima 11/08/05.

⁸ Interview with Oxfam America staff member 10/07/05.

⁹ Another AIDSESP publication calls for the benefits of extractive activities already in operation to be channelled towards indigenous peoples who are affected, but implies that it is against any new extraction of subsoil resources - gas, oil, gold and other minerals (AIDSESP 2004b).

extractive and other industries.¹⁰ However, commentators in Peru suggest that CONAP has gone too far in this regard, and has been careless about the alliances it forms. As a result, it is alleged that when the government or a business enterprise wishes or needs to say that it works with indigenous peoples, it approaches CONAP solely for this purpose. When questioned on Camisea, the leader expressed his opinion that although mistakes were being made, the Machiguenga were still deriving benefit from the project.

These schisms amongst indigenous peoples are not limited to the national level. Since 2005, the international Amazonian organisation COICA, that links national level indigenous federations from all Amazon basin countries, has been paralysed by an extremely damaging internal divide. At the time of writing, divisions were such that there were two 'COICA's'. COICA also has an ambiguous and difficult relationship with INGOs. Its 2005 annual report makes a number of non-specific accusations against conservation and poverty-focused NGOs that use indigenous peoples to justify their own ideologies and projects. On more than one occasion INGOs and those involved in 'international cooperation' are described as 'parasites' by COICA's former general coordinator, Sebastião Haji Manchineri.

No nos sorprende la opinión de determinadas parásitas, beneficiarios del tema indígena que ha décadas viven a costa de nuestros nombres, pero en la hora [de] comprometerse niegan a los principios que supuestamente defienden (COICA 2005: 182).

We are not surprised by the attitude of certain parasites, who benefit from indigenous issues and have, for decades, lived off us by using our names, but when it comes to committing, refuse to support the principles that they supposedly defend.

While the sentiments are similar to those of AIDSESEP, the language used is far less moderate. However, on the final pages of the report, COICA acknowledges the financial support that has made its work and publications possible, including a number of INGOs and agencies for international cooperation.

The divisions and arguments of national and international federations may seem a long way removed from the work of COMARU at the grassroots, but it became evident during fieldwork that these debates do reach the Machiguenga organisation and its members. Furthermore, they may have played a role in the extent to which COMARU is willing to collaborate with international actors, as will be discussed in more detail below.

International and Peruvian NGO involvement in Camisea

The processes of exploration and preparation for gas extraction in the Urubamba region have attracted the attention of a multitude of international and Peruvian NGOs over the past decade. During the late 1990s and up until mid-2004 as the financing for the project hung in the balance, lobbying groups were active in both Lima and Washington, with approximately forty organisations involved in campaigns and protests. Interest in the region had been sparked by Shell's second appearance in the Camisea in the mid-1990s, which came soon after news of the scandal of its operations in Ogoniland, Nigeria had broken. Campaign work was further spurred by the memory of the social and environmental destruction apparently wrought during Shell's explorations in the region in the mid-1980s. At this time there was already a split between NGOs (both national and international) that opposed outright any gas extraction in the region, and those that decided to take on an advisory role, to ensure that Shell's operations were as culturally and environmentally sensitive as possible.

¹⁰ Interview with head of CONAP, Lima, 10/08/05.

After IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) loans were eventually secured in 2004 by the energy consortium led by PlusPetrol, NGO interest in the issue of Camisea appears to have waned. A loose lobbying coalition still exists amongst organisations in Lima and in Washington, but these groupings have always been volatile, due to the difficulty in reconciling the differing approaches and agendas of the organisations concerned and a lack of time and funds specifically dedicated to work on the issue within these organisations. Some of these bodies take a particular stand against extraction by multinational corporations in the Amazon area, whilst others are more specifically concerned with environmental conservation and the creation of national parks.¹¹ At the time of the second fieldwork visit, a number of organisations in both Washington and Lima were reengaging with the Camisea issue or increasing the amount of time dedicated to it. This reengagement had been spurred by the series of spills from the gas pipeline, and the prospect of Camisea II – the second phase of the project that involves exploitation of Block 56 and the construction of a fractionation plant on the coast at Paracas, for which the IDB is considering funding. The granting of further concessions in adjacent areas is also a motivating factor behind renewed NGO organising. Currently the lobbying groups in Lima and Washington are calling for a full social and environmental audit of the indirect impacts of the first phase of the project and an audit to check the safety of the pipeline, before funding is approved for the second phase. However, they are divided as to whether funding should be conditional on an adequate response to the results of these audits. In Lima, a group of NGOs now known as 'Acción Ciudadana Camisea' (Citizen Action on Camisea) continues to work towards an independent monitoring system for the conditions on the first IDB loan.

Despite periods of intense engagement on the issue of Camisea gas extraction in Washington and Lima, and website statements of support for indigenous rights in the face of extractive activities, fieldwork research for this study revealed that NGO activity on the ground in the Urubamba area is extremely limited. Few national or international NGOs have attempted to work (through partners or otherwise) at the local level in the Urubamba area with indigenous communities and their organisations. Only one NGO, CEDIA, has had a sustained presence in the region. It has worked there since the early 1980s, principally on mapping and registering of land titles. CEDIA, as noted above, has always had a close association with COMARU and was instrumental in the founding of the organisation. The other NGOs that are working in the Urubamba are principally involved in the implementation of company sponsored (participatory) monitoring programmes.

The Parks and Peoples debate

For the larger conservation NGOs, how, or indeed whether, they collaborate with indigenous people and their representative organisations is a complex, sensitive and politically charged issue. In November 2004, Mac Chapin published an extended article in *WorldWatch* magazine that was highly critical of the largest international conservation organisations for their attitude towards indigenous people living in parks and reserves and in other areas considered to be biodiversity 'hotspots'. This article caused a considerable polemic, and a large number of letters in response to it were printed in the following edition of the magazine.

His argument runs that indigenous peoples and conservation organisations had little to do with each other in the 1970s and early 1980s, but that a call from COICA in 1989 for these organisations to join forces with indigenous groups in the Amazon resonated throughout the sector as a potentially viable, alternative approach to conservation. In many cases, the response to this call and the subsequent declaration of Iquitos, were integrated conservation and

¹¹ For example, the Lower Urubamba area falls within the tropical Andes zone, declared by Conservation International to be one of the world's biological hotspots. As a result, it is also encompassed in their conservation 'corridor', called Vilcabamba-Aramboró.

development projects. However, these were often badly designed and unsuccessful. For Chapin, this is one of the reasons why:

Discussion of 'natural' alliances between conservationists and indigenous peoples and the need to work closely with local communities, common just a few years ago, has largely disappeared. It has been displaced, in the biggest conservationist NGOs, by talk of changed priorities, with a new focus on large-scale conservation strategies and the importance of science, rather than social realities, in determining their agendas (Chapin 2004:18).

Dowie (1995) in his investigation of American environmentalism, also highlights the issue of 'science' and the privileging of scientific grounds for large-scale conservation activities. His analysis implies that there is a continued elitism within the environmental lobby in the US, which has strong roots in white, urban middle-class men preserving the last areas of 'wilderness' in their own country.¹² More recently (since the 1970s) the attention of these organisations has turned to environmental conservation outside of the US, particularly with the recognition of the problem of growing carbon emissions.

Linked to the scientific, 'purist' approach to conservation, is the argument that many indigenous groups are not necessarily inclined towards biodiversity conservation (Smith 2001). This is not a new debate, and an exchange of articles in 2000 in the journal *Conservation Biology* sets out the main arguments on each side. On the opposing side to the purists are the pragmatists who insist that indigenous peoples' rights to use their own land as they wish should be respected, and that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that their land use practices are largely sustainable, and thus the best option for conservation (Schwartzman, Moreira & Nepstad 2000; Schwartzman, Nepstad & Moreira 2000). There are suggestions of 'ecological imperialism' in some of the rhetoric employed by conservationists who would remove humans from nature, as the following extract from the *Conservation Biology* debate illustrates:

We don't agree that 'forest peoples and their representatives [...] speak for the forest.' They may speak for their version of a forest, but they do not speak for the forest we want to conserve (Redford & Sanderson 2000: 1364 emphasis added).

Chapin's article also notes that indigenous peoples are regarded as increasingly 'difficult' in that they have become involved in civil disruption. The idea that indigenous federations are 'too political' is raised particularly when indigenous people are demanding land title, or campaigning against energy and mining companies. Chapin quotes one source from a major donor foundation who believes international conservationist NGOs are shifting away from an approach that supports the building of local capacity (through NGOs that work with indigenous groups) towards establishing themselves as semi-permanent international organisations. The reluctance of big conservation NGOs to work with politicised groups is related to the fact that they themselves have close relations with governments (including their own) and multinational corporations.

Perhaps most worrying is the trend at the HQ level of international conservation NGOs to remove the terms 'indigenous' and 'traditional' from policy documents in order to refer instead to 'poor' and 'marginalised' people. Chapin argues that 'this linguistic shift robs the dignity of indigenous peoples' (Chapin 2004:27) and allows these organisations to excuse their lack of engagement with indigenous peoples by stating that they do not work on issues of poverty alleviation or social

¹² Conservationism in the US dates back to the creation of the first national parks (Yellowstone, Yosemite) which were established to protect these areas from the continued expansion of the frontier. It could be argued that this approach continues to colour much US conservation thinking, including its attitude to conservation abroad.

welfare. He does, however, note that at the field level, staff of the big conservation organisations are considerably more pragmatic about the need to engage with indigenous people and traditional land use practices. As he concludes,

Indigenous peoples live in most of the ecosystems that conservationists are so anxious to preserve. Often they are responsible for the relatively intact state of those ecosystems, and they are without doubt preferable to the most common alternatives – logging, oil drilling, cattle ranching, and large-scale industrial agriculture – that are destroying ever larger tracts of forest throughout the tropical latitudes. Forming partnerships and collaborative alliances between indigenous and traditional peoples and conservationists is no easy task, but it would seem to be one of the most effective ways to save the increasingly threadbare ecosystems that still exist (Chapin 2004: 30).

One positive outcome of Chapin's article is that the high profile debate it sparked has forced the INGOs most heavily criticised (WWF, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy) to review their work with indigenous people. WWF and Conservation International have a presence in Peru and claim to be working on issues surrounding the Camisea gas fields. The issues raised in Chapin's paper will be discussed in more detail and with specific relation to COMARU in subsequent sections of this paper.

COMARU as a social movement organisation

Developing as a protest movement

One of the principal aims of this study was to investigate the interaction between two types of non-governmental public actor: indigenous social movement organisations and international NGOs. Whilst the second term can be applied with relative ease to the legally based, non-profit, non-governmental institutions examined in this paper, there is, and has been for several decades, considerable debate over the nature of social movements as an organisational form. The original proposal for this study took 'social movements' to mean groups that organise to voice some form of resistance. This was understood as either resistance against the status quo or resistance against a future threat or violation of rights. The politicisation of demands was also a defining feature, and perhaps one that distinguishes movements from NGOs. Taking Foweraker's argument, it was declared that social movements aim to 'integrate previously excluded groups and issues into local or national politics' (Foweraker 1995:63). Finally, as Martin (2003) has noted, in an era where states' power is in decline, multinational companies and inter-governmental organisations are becoming new sites for resistance and protest. As such, the definition of social movements presented in the original proposal for this piece of research included the notion of joint activities to challenge power holders, rather than purely government authorities.¹³

A more tightly defined understanding of social movements has been set out by Tilly, a renowned scholar of collective action.

A social movement consists of a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of that population's numbers, commitment, unity and worthiness (Tilly 1994:7).

This definition is useful in the study of COMARU in that it helps to frame both how the organisation presents itself externally, and what it strives to achieve internally, as will be explored below. However, it is increasingly common to define social movements as loose networks of actors that coalesce around particular issues. As Whittier notes,

Social movements are neither fixed nor narrowly bounded in space, time, or membership. Instead, they are made up of shifting clusters of organisations, networks, communities, and activist individuals, connected by participation in challenges and collective identities through which participants define the boundaries and significance of their groups (Whittier 2002: 289).

Similar definitions of social movements as relational groups of networked actors with blurred boundaries are also used by Bebbington et al. (2006), Diani (2003) and Staggenborg (2002). Within the wider community or network that makes up the social movement, there is generally at least one 'social movement organisation' or SMO, a more enduring and formal type of actor that gradually coalesces around ad hoc protest and campaigning that has arisen as a result of external threat or a change in political circumstances, and then coordinates further collective action. As McAdam et al. (1988:716) note, the SMO must then mediate between the 'larger macro environment and the set of micro-dynamics on which the movement depends'. However, SMOs can develop in different ways. As an alternative, the leadership of an already existing organisation can 'appropriate' it, in order to promote activities that are more focused on protest for the

¹³ For further discussion of the differences between social movements and NGOs see Earle (2004).

achievement of a particular goal (McAdam 2003). This is closer to the way in which COMARU is evolving.

It should be made clear at this point that COMARU leaders and members themselves do not describe the organisation as a 'social movement', although through their membership of AIDSESEP they are part of what the national body describes as the 'indigenous movement'. Furthermore, it could be argued that through its networks to international campaigning actors, it is part of a much broader social movement that has as its overall goal the limitation of the negative environmental and social impacts of large-scale resource extraction in the Amazon. For its leaders and members, however, COMARU is an 'indigenous organisation' that represents its affiliated communities. But although COMARU came into existence as a representative organisation, in recent years it has begun to adopt protest strategies and mobilise collective activities that are drawn from the strategic repertoire of social movements, specifically protest marches, blockades and boycotts. For this reason, the authors believe it is appropriate to analyse COMARU's relationships with external actors through the lens of social movement theory.

COMARU gradually came into being at the beginning of the 1990s and in its early years worked very closely with CEDIA, principally on the mapping of territories and the establishment of legal title, with occasional emergency response to the incursions of colonists on Machiguenga territory. Whilst this process was framed by the notion of rights to ancestral lands, and a vindication of these from the Peruvian government, in the main COMARU and CEDIA were following bureaucratic procedures for the establishment of legal title. Leaders of both organisations note the extent to which the work of COMARU has had to change since the late 1990s, when plans for gas extraction became a reality. The presence of the energy consortium and their subcontractors as well as the physical infrastructure of the gas plant and the pipeline are perceived as a constant threat, and one which the organisation must be ready at all times to counter. It has become increasingly clear that the Peruvian government is very closely aligned to the interests of the multinational energy companies. Experience over the past few years has shown that in times of conflict over the project, the relevant ministries and oversight bodies that have been put in place do little to protect the rights or interests of the Machiguenga.¹⁴ The one exception is the ombudsman but this organisation has very limited power and resources. Without a powerful ally, COMARU has had to take on the role of challenger to the State and energy companies in an almost daily struggle to defend the rights and promote the interests of its member communities.

Much of the work of COMARU in the past has been of low visibility: Even Machiguenga community members, or *comuneros*, themselves question whether they really do have legal title to their lands, since this is not something that the community can physically 'see'. Similarly, COMARU's statutes point out that it will channel members' demands (for services, etc) to the appropriate body, rather than provide these itself. Further, COMARU's stance towards the extraction of gas from the Camisea region has never been one of outright hostility. Indeed, its approach began as one of cautious optimism, as documented by De Weck and Cardich (1997): *comuneros* expressed their wish for remunerated employment and the developmental benefits (of electricity, drinking water, medical posts and schools) that they believed would follow from the extraction of gas on their land. However, COMARU has had to take an increasingly antagonistic and belligerent stance as the promised benefits are not forthcoming, companies routinely flout their own codes of conduct in their dealings with communities, and ruptures of the gas pipeline as well as lax environmental practices cause significant negative impacts for the livelihoods of the indigenous population. In this way, and faced with new threats, COMARU has had to bring the demands and problems of the Machiguenga, who have been all but excluded from the polity since

¹⁴ The new government of Alan Garcia, elected to power in 2006, is considering radical changes to a number of these organisations, particularly the 'Defensoría del Proyecto Camisea', the conflict prevention/resolution body currently run out of the Universidad Católica, for poor performance and lack of engagement.

the creation of the Peruvian state, into the public consciousness and the political arena, just as Foweraker's definition of a social movement would suggest.

As such the work of COMARU has become increasingly visible and public and its statements and denouncements clearly depict a struggle between the Machiguenga people and the State/energy companies. In their rhetoric, COMARU leaders point out, as a matter of course, their worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, as the quotation below attests.

COMARU desde su creación viene trabajando a favor de las comunidades nativas de la etnia matsigenka...[la cual] es la etnia amazónica que mayor protagonismo ha tenido últimamente, como consecuencia de diversos factores de carácter social, cultural y energéticos al encontrarse en sus territorios grandes reservas de gas como los de Camisea y Pagoreni, cuya explotación ha obligado a sus residentes a modificar su habitat tradicional y el de sus ancestrales usos y costumbres...La cuenca del río Urubamba donde se halla la gran parte de las comunidades matsigenkas, forma parte del territorio amazónico del Cusco, considerado como reserva de la mayor parte de la biodiversidad de nuestro territorio y la gran riqueza cultural que es necesario mantener y proteger. Es por tal motivo que COMARU asume ese trabajo que cada vez se hace mas importante y hoy aun en las actuales circunstancias de la explotación gasífera de Camisea, en la cual se puede decir que afecta la paz, tranquilidad y la vida de las comunidades nativas involucradas en el proyecto de las zonas de explotación, recordando que los matsiguengas viven en armonía con la naturaleza, protegiendo el medio ambiente y utilizando los recursos naturales (flora y fauna) de acuerdo a sus necesidades. ...[Estamos] afrontando todo aquellos sucesos por velar por nuestros derechos como personas y no porque nos traten como apelativos de nativos, como si la palabra nativo solo se refiera a los que viven en la selva, y nosotros decimos orgullosos de ser natos de la madre selva que nos vio nacer, que hoy se esta consumiendo (COMARU 2005: 2-3).

Since its inception, COMARU has been working on behalf of the native communities of Machiguenga ethnicity. This Amazon ethnic group has been the most important protagonist lately, as a result of particular social, cultural and energy-linked factors, due to the location of large reserves of gas on its territory, such as those found in the Camisea and Pagoreni fields, the exploration of which has forced residents in the area to modify their traditional habitat and their ancestral practices and customs. The Urubamba river valley is where the majority of Machiguenga communities are found, and it is part of the Amazonian territory of Cusco, which is considered a reserve for the majority of biodiversity in our country and of great cultural wealth that must be maintained and protected. COMARU has taken on this task, which is becoming more and more important with the current situation of Camisea gas extraction, which can be said to be affecting the peace, tranquillity and life of native communities caught up in the project in the areas where gas is being extracted, remembering that the Machiguenga live in harmony with nature, protecting the environment and using resources (flora and fauna) according to their needs. [...] We are facing up to this situation so as to defend our rights as people, and not just because we are referred to as 'natives', as though this word only referred to people who live in the forest. We are proud to be natives of the mother forest where we were born, and that today is being consumed.

This quotation stresses COMARU's worth as the defender of the rights of the Machiguenga and of the environment, linking their ethnicity to the environment, as children and guardians of the forest and contrasting this with the way in which ancestral traditions have been affected by outsiders. The importance of their work is flagged up, not only because COMARU must protect the rights of its members, but also because of the wealth of biodiversity and culture in the area. Unity and numbers are assumed by the implication that COMARU represents all of the

Machiguenga in the Urubamba, and that they are the ethnic group that has acted as ‘protagonist’ in various struggles caused by external agents. In this statement COMARU specifically commits itself to the task of protecting biodiversity and culture, but also, in the last sentence, implies that, since the Machiguenga are *of* the forest, it would be impossible for them to act otherwise.

Whilst COMARU’s statements relate closely to Tilly’s public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, these words belie a considerable difficulty – that of achieving a *sustained* challenge from the Machiguenga towards those they see to be violating their rights and preventing their development. It is precisely the mobilisation of members that presents a considerable difficulty for COMARU as an organisation. When significant numbers of Machiguenga do come together to protest, cause disruption and make demands it is hailed as an unusual occurrence by internal and external observers. However, the current leader has expressed his concern precisely for this lack of mobilisation and is striving to generate greater involvement of Machiguenga leaders and *comuneros* in the activities of the organisation. Despite difficulties with sustaining protest, the events of 2005 would suggest that COMARU is at present developing from a representative organisation (channelling member’s requests and promoting their interests with government bodies) to becoming an organisation more oriented towards protest and challenge.

During 2005, on three occasions, COMARU was able to mobilise Machiguenga communities into disruptive protest. In all three cases, these protests were motivated by what was perceived as an inadequate response by the authorities to spills from the pipeline. The first of these occurred in December 2004, just four months after the inauguration of the project. When the companies and government agencies continued with plans for the approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the next concession for the area (Block 56), COMARU’s member communities protested during the hearing (it was being held in a native community in the Lower Urubamba). They achieved the suspension of the hearing by shouting slogans, waving banners and banging on empty oil cylinders before presenting the authorities with a further letter of complaint over the pipeline spill. The hearing was then rescheduled, but again suspended when COMARU members arranged a total boycott and abandoned the community for the duration of the meeting. Their most recent protest occurred after a second spill in the Urubamba region, the fourth from the pipeline in total. On this occasion, the three indigenous federations from the area joined forces for the first time, to organise a blockade of the river. This prevented supplies reaching the energy company base at Las Malvinas. This action continued until high level representation from the companies and Peruvian government arrived in the area to meet with the indigenous federations.

These actions support the argument of this research project that COMARU can currently be understood as a social movement organisation. However, it is clearly fragile and still in a nascent stage of development: taking a hardline stance against powerful adversaries is not without its problems and on one occasion the response from the energy companies threatened the very existence of COMARU as an organisation, weakening relationships between communities and the leadership. It should also be noted that the current shift towards more protest-oriented activities may not be a permanent one. In the early years of COMARU’s existence, the organisation engaged in acts of collective resistance against settlers encroaching on Machiguenga territory in the Upper Urubamba region, but this type of activity later died down. If levels of threat from the Camisea gas project are seen to decrease, examples of social movement style activity may also diminish as the routine functions of COMARU as a representative organisation again take priority. Social movement scholars note that levels of collective action may rise and fall according to internal dynamics and external circumstances (Staggenborg 2002; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1988). However, there is little discussion in the literature of how representative organisations combine their statutory commitments to their members with more radical protest actions. This issue is given further consideration in Earle (forthcoming).

Green rhetoric

As anticipated in the original proposal for this study, COMARU has a strong rhetoric on indigenous rights to ancestral territories, as well as indigenous people as natural conservationists. Speeches made by COMARU leaders, as well as written declarations and denouncements (such as that quoted at length above) suggest an unbreakable link between the Machiguenga, their land and their environment. Terms such as 'nietos de la tierra' 'grandchildren of the earth' and 'habitantes milenarios' 'millenarian inhabitants'¹⁵ stress the thousands of years that their ancestors have been on the land. To reinforce this natural link further, and to bring indigenous discourse into the same frame of reference as that used by many external agents, particularly conservationists, COMARU leaders speak of their lands as 'nuestro medioambiente' 'nuestra naturaleza', 'nuestro habitat': *our* environment, nature and habitat.¹⁶ This innateness and naturalness of place is contrasted with the inconceivability that the Machiguenga could live elsewhere, were their land and livelihoods to be destroyed. In a speech to an international audience in Lima in August 2005, the COMARU leader asked: 'where could we possibly go?' followed by, 'do you want us living in shanty towns on the outskirts of Lima?'. In external meetings the idea of the Machiguenga out of place and outside of their natural habitat is used to threaten an increase in urban poverty and delinquency. But the same leader also asked these questions in internal COMARU meetings, where they were used to force more worldly Machiguenga, who had travelled to Quillabamba, to imagine what might happen to those who had never travelled beyond their communities if their livelihoods were destroyed. This was used as a way of stressing the importance of fighting for the preservation of Machiguenga lands and their traditional way of life.

COMARU leaders emphasise, when addressing an external audience, that their people have been looking after the natural environment and conserving biodiversity for thousands of years, living in harmony with their surroundings. Allegations of a reduction in fish and meat as a result of the Camisea project are widespread and the current situation is contrasted to how the Machiguenga were able to live beforehand.¹⁷ Here the negative impact on livelihoods caused by Camisea is contrasted with the balanced relationship between the Machiguenga and the environment over thousands of years. However, this discourse of conservation and of concern for biodiversity appears to be for external consumption only. Biodiversity conservation as such was not discussed by COMARU leaders or community members in meetings in Quillabamba or in *comunidades nativas* in the Lower Urubamba. Here the issue of concern was natural resource management along with alternative small-scale farming techniques. This difference is significant, as will be discussed below.

Another aspect of COMARU rhetoric that is very strong is the notion of indigenous rights. Internal and external documents often refer to the long running battle to get legal title for Machiguenga communities. But broader issues of human rights are also invoked. An information leaflet produced by COMARU about its work echoes the international convention on human rights when it refers to;

¹⁵ Terms used by the COMARU leader in a presentation to the IDB, Lima 17 August 2005.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Whether this is actually the case is a moot point, as with changing settlement patterns and the establishment of community boundaries that had never been in place before, it would appear that demand for fish and game is exceeding the rate of replacement. Also, ethnographic accounts from the late 1970s before the arrival of energy companies suggest that fishing and hunting trips were not always successful, and that fish or meat were not eaten every day. However, most observers would agree that the massive increase in river traffic on the Urubamba will have had an impact on fish breeding grounds and habits.

La impostergable y importante labor del COMARU para proteger y defender los Derechos Inalienables de las Comunidades Indígenas afiliadas a nuestra organización (COMARU nd).

The urgent and important work of COMARU to protect and defend the Inalienable Rights of Indigenous Communities affiliated to our organisation.

Most frequently cited, however, is the ILO's convention 169 on indigenous rights, and the Peruvian government's ratification of this convention. COMARU texts (and those of AIDSESEP) are littered with reference to the convention and the duty of the Peruvian state to uphold it. COMARU's declarations and letters are often brought to a close with the following sentence:

Exigimos el respeto a nuestros derechos fundamentales a la vida, dignidad, salud, autonomía y a un medio ambiente sano, de conformidad con la Constitución Política del Perú y el Convenio 169-OIT (COMARU 2005b; 2005c).

We demand respect for our fundamental rights to life, dignity, health, autonomy and a healthy environment, in accordance with the Political Constitution of Peru and the ILO's Convention 169.

Of particular import for the Machiguenga within Convention 169 is the right to consultation prior to exploitation of resources on indigenous territory and for this consultation to be mediated through indigenous organisations. This point is reiterated in a number of letters to the IDB and the Peruvian Ministry of Energy and Mines. For example,

Por su parte, el Convenio 169 de la OIT, ratificado por el Estado Peruano...establece en su artículo N° 6 que los pueblos indígenas tienen derecho a ser consultados, mediante procedimientos adecuados y en particular a través de sus instituciones representativas sobre cualquier decisión administrativa que pueda afectarlos. Señala asimismo, que las consultas que se les formule deberán efectuarse de buena fe y de manera apropiada a las circunstancias (COMARU 2005d).

For its part, Convention 169 of the ILO, ratified by the Peruvian State...establishes in article number 6 that indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted, in accordance with adequate procedures, and in particular through their representative institutions, on any administrative decision that could affect them. It also notes that the consultations that are established should be carried out in good faith and in a manner appropriate to the circumstances.

Recipients of these letters are warned that they will be violating the fundamental rights of the Machiguenga if their requests for adequate consultation are not met. Also enshrined in the convention is the right to live according to traditional customs; and for adequate compensation to be made whenever exploitation of resources endangers traditional livelihoods.¹⁸

COMARU's rhetoric as a legitimate representative of an ethnic group with an entrenched cultural affinity and clear rights to its territory is well established. But whilst it is considered by some working in Peru to be the belligerent 'bogeyman' of the Camisea area, internally it is fairly weak and it survives on low levels of financial and human resources. As such, it is a credit to the organisation that it has managed to take a combative and independent stance so often over its

¹⁸ The use of references to international norms and human rights accords to back up movement demands and to try to hold their States accountable as signatories, has been noted within other organisations by Keck and Sikkink (1998).

history, in particular when working in an arena with powerful state and multinational actors. The following sections of the paper examine whether the use of this rhetoric and its stand on indigenous rights have impacted upon its relationships with international non-governmental actors.

International conservation NGOs and indigenous groups

Social movement theory posits social movements as loose networks and coalitions of actors with broadly similar goals. As Whittier notes, they are made up of 'shifting clusters of organisations' that respond to changes in political opportunities for collective action, as well as personal grievances (Whittier 2002: 289). It is the job of the social movement organisation, or SMO, to 'read' both the macro climate and micro-level demands and sustain collective action by mediating between these different levels. This is a difficult task, and social movements are notoriously ephemeral. The literature on social movements stresses the role that the SMO can play in whether a broader movement coalition survives or not, and posits cooption by external actors as one way in which the impact of collective action can be diminished. The consolidation of an SMO can itself be problematic, if this is achieved through dependence on external support.

The establishment of formal organizations [...] sets in motion [...] the destructive forces of oligarchization, cooptation, and the dissolution of indigenous support [all of which] tames the movement by encouraging insurgents to pursue only those goals acceptable to external sponsors (McAdam quoted in Piven & Cloward 1995: 159-160).

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988) also point out the dangers involved in establishing resource links to elite groups external to the movement's mass base:

In contrast to the all too often impoverished mass base, external groups – especially those of the elite variety – tend to be resource rich. At the same time, external groups do not share the same level of concern or self-interested commitment to the goals of the movement as the movement's beneficiary constituency. This means that external support is likely to prove more fleeting and more politically conditioned than grassroots support. The latter characterization highlights the very real dangers of cooptation and control in the establishment of external support linkages. Such ties grant considerable control over movement affairs to the source from which the resources are obtained (McAdam et al. 1988).

This research project sought to examine whether support from external actors for an indigenous organisation would necessarily lead to cooptation as the social movement literature would suggest. We would argue that in the case of COMARU, it is not so much that external groups do not share their same level of concern over resource extraction; but that below superficial commonalities, they have very different agendas to pursue. The following section discusses the difficulties in finding common ground and avoiding cooptation.

Finding common ground: problems and potential

The extracts from COMARU documents discussed in the previous section illustrate the extent to which the Machiguenga organisation uses the discourse of rights in its public statements and challenges to powerholders. As well as asserting 'natural' rights to land and the environment through a harmonious relationship with nature, the organisation also invokes international human rights law and specific legislation on indigenous rights. The question posed by this study was whether, once armed with this strong discourse, an indigenous social movement would be able to resist the imposition of externally-driven, pro-conservation agendas on their own organisation. It also queried whether evidence would be found for a negotiation of priorities so that common

ground could be achieved. The following section is based on information gathered during interviewing of representatives from six international NGOs in Washington DC in July 2006. These interviews were followed up, where applicable, with interviews with staff members of the same organisations in their Lima offices.

The discussion above of the ways in which COMARU is developing into a protest movement is key to an understanding of its relationships with national and international non-governmental actors, and the difficulties inherent in establishing common ground between them. One of the main obstacles to collaborative working with indigenous groups, as perceived by INGOs, is the frequent politicisation of their goals. This can put the indigenous group into an antagonistic or oppositional position vis-à-vis the national level government. In the case of Ecuador, the indigenous movement has gone further by creating a political party that contests elections. During interviews with INGO representatives in Washington, those from the two conservation-oriented organisations referred to politicisation as one of the key obstacles to their support for indigenous federations.

“Where we find it hard to work with them is on the political issues, because the federations have gone beyond being representative bodies to being political bodies, and we are not able to be party political, we cannot be aligned with a political party, so that’s where we have to pull back sometimes, if they want us to take positions where they are really acting as a political party. In Ecuador, for example, the indigenous federations are basically under a political party. In Bolivia we have problems too.” WWF, Washington.

Other problems cited by respondents are also linked to the nature of social movements as an organisational form. Indigenous federation leaders are elected, rather than appointed through an interview process as they would be in an NGO. As one observer who has worked closely with indigenous groups for many years noted, leaders are generally chosen by their peers for their ability to speak in public and their commitment to their people’s cause, not for their managerial or administrative skills. INGO informants complained of a lack of professionalism and maturity of leadership in indigenous organisations generally. The frequent replacement of individuals in key positions was also mentioned. This may be a feature of the complexities of indigenous politics.

“These organisations are political, so they are not always consistent, there is a lot of fluctuation, the leadership changes, their positions change.” WWF, Washington.

“A lack of maturity and a lack of preparation and leadership.” CI, Washington.

“The turnover in the leadership and sometimes the internal politics make it difficult for capacity building projects to take off.” Oxfam America, Washington.

Alongside the internal politics and politicisation of indigenous movements generally, Camisea specifically was identified by a Conservation International representative in Washington as a particularly difficult area to work on, because of the support by the Peruvian government for the project.

“It was interesting at the beginning because CI Peru didn’t want to get involved in Camisea. It was too much of a hot potato. We sort of pushed them from here and said, ‘you can’t just let this happen, it’s going to roll over us’.” CI, Washington

This reluctance on the part of CI Peru could be seen as surprising considering the location of the Camisea gas fields in the Vilcabamba-Aramboró ecological corridor where the organisation had been concentrating its efforts for many years. However, the implication by the US representative

was that it was precisely because of the high levels of investment made in conservation initiatives in the area that a cautious approach to opposition to Camisea was employed.

“The first thing we had to decide was whether we wanted to stop the project and we said, ‘It doesn’t make sense. Politically it’s going to be too difficult. It’s a Peruvian aspiration, the government has been behind this for a long, long time. We’re not going to succeed. Let’s try and make it better.’” CI, Washington

She also noted that no other organisations in Peru, apart from activists, want to ‘sit at the table and start building a strategy against Camisea’. Opposition to Camisea is equated to a political act, and clearly, politicised activity makes international conservation organisations uncomfortable. This point was also made by an observer in Washington with a long history of analysis of the Camisea project.

“Conservation groups have projects in Peru, and major investments, so if you’re talking about doing something about the biggest foreign investment in Peru’s history, and the linchpin in the biggest deal in the Government of Peru’s economic plan, and something that the President of Peru is touting everyday in the newspaper as the saviour of the national economy, that is serious political stakes and serious national security interests, at the highest level of the host government. So if you’re a TNC, WWF or CI, or even to some extent an Oxfam, that creates a potential conflict of interests, obviously. You could get thrown out of the country, in the extreme, and you have millions and millions of dollars invested in not only an office and personnel, but in actual conservation investments.”

The attitude of the representative of Oxfam America, an organisation with a development remit, was markedly different. He pointed out that working on rights issues to support populations that are being marginalised by their own governments will inevitably bring Oxfam and its partners into confrontation with power holders and that these types of challenges, as well as those posed by a lack of capacity amongst organised groups in the South, must be taken on if any progress is to be made. Precisely because of its support for communities affected by mining, the Lima office of Oxfam America has been criticised by other members of the Oxfam ‘family’ and has been investigated by the Peruvian government. For other organisations that shy away from the ‘political’, the very real opposition that Oxfam America has stirred up is cited as an example of the need for caution.

Representatives from each of the six organisations interviewed during the second fieldwork trip in Washington and then in field offices in Lima, were asked in what areas they believed their organisation could work in collaboration with indigenous actors. The position taken by each organisation on how they could find common ground with indigenous groups was clearly dependent on its remit and resources. Three of the organisations are small outfits that work principally on lobbying and advocacy whilst the other three are large operational agencies, two of which have a specific focus on conservation. All six organisations have been involved in advocacy initiatives in Washington on the issue of Camisea. However, lobbying work on issues that affect indigenous people is not necessarily synonymous with achieving common ground with indigenous organisations. Not all respondents made a connection between their advocacy activities on Camisea and support for COMARU and few organisations that lobby on Camisea do so in defence of indigenous rights. The motivations behind advocacy work on Camisea are discussed in greater detail below. The CI representative in Washington stated at the outset that the organisation is not an advocacy NGO but instead works to build up good interaction between the corporate sector and conservationists. Over Camisea, once the organisation had decided to work to pressure the potential funders of the project, she felt that CI could ‘open doors’ for other ‘more activist’ organisations through its negotiations at the IDB, EXIM Bank or the US Treasury.

In a similar way, WWF US representatives believe their organisation can play a role as an interlocutor at institutions such as the IDB in Washington:

“We can provide that supportive role, relaying the messages that are being generated by local organisations and also by our office in Lima, that need to be communicated.” WWF US, Washington

The staff member of Oxfam America in Washington also used the metaphor of opening doors and channelling information, but here support for indigenous voices was more specific and mention was made of the need to spread information from negotiations and events in Washington back to partners in Peru.

“We do information gathering – what’s happening right now with potential funding for the second phase of Camisea. Keeping an ear to the ground, listening out for new funders. Then feeding this down to the office in Lima and other groups in Peru. Another function is identifying advocacy opportunities that groups in Lima and at grassroots may not see, but we can identify here [...] Also facilitating visits by partners to Washington – a door-opening function.” Oxfam America, Washington

Arranging for indigenous leaders to visit Washington to speak at meetings and undertake their own lobbying work is also a function of two of the smaller lobbying organisations. A representative from AmazonWatch stated, ‘We are not trying to speak for them, we try to bring them here’, although she also claimed that they are ‘working with a mandate from the communities’ and the director of the organisation went as far as to claim to be ‘echoing’ the voice of COMARU and of ‘loyalty’ to its member communities. It is clear, however, that visits from indigenous leaders to Washington are sporadic, and as mentioned above, communications to COMARU headquarters and beyond to the Urubamba region are extremely difficult. AmazonWatch does not, and could not hope to have every one of its meetings or press releases on Camisea sanctioned by COMARU, let alone the member communities, many of which themselves have poor communications with their representative body. It has further been criticised by COMARU leaders for acting on its own agenda, in the name of the indigenous group. When questioned on how easy it was to find common ground with COMARU, the representative stated that, since COMARU has never positioned itself in complete opposition to the Camisea project, her organisation has not condemned it either. However, AmazonWatch’s statements on the project have been extremely strongly worded, as will be discussed below. Elsewhere, recognition of the difficulties involved in advocating for those affected at the grassroots by large-scale extractive industry was more fully acknowledged.

“There are real gaps in the representative nature of some of the advocacy that we are doing in Washington. Part of that is logistical, it’s hard to get information out of the Lower Urubamba to Washington. There is also the issue of the pace of work in the Urubamba and the pace in Washington. Often we get opportunities that we have to act on very quickly and to try and get messages to [the leadership] and COMARU, and to get feedback into some opportunity that happens really quickly, that’s sometimes difficult. If most of the groups in DC are being honest with themselves, they would note that there is a degree of latitude in terms of what you say that you hope is supportive of the communities there, but it’s not as if we are always acting in a direct, speaking-on-behalf role.” Oxfam America, Washington

The same representative noted further:

“There are a lot of important issues on the international level – who speaks for whom. If AIDSESEP comes to Washington and they’re a national federation, and COMARU is a

member of AIDSESEP, but if AIDSESEP and COMARU are, hypothetically, not speaking to each other, is AIDSESEP representing what is happening in the Urubamba or not? A lot of the advocacy targets in Washington are not going to take the nuanced view and disaggregate these questions of indigenous representation. You see an indigenous person in Washington and you take it for granted that they are representing a community.” Oxfam America, Washington.

Advocacy work is not the easy route to achieving common ground with indigenous peoples. Aside from communication difficulties, the fact that COMARU has always taken a pragmatic and somewhat ad hoc attitude towards gas extraction and the energy companies working in Camisea makes it difficult for lobbyists, particularly those with more of a conservation focus, to ensure their agendas match up.

Aside from advocacy initiatives and acting as a bridge for organisations in the field, the larger operational agencies were also able to speak about their general policy towards partnering with indigenous groups on specific projects, and where they felt they could find common ground. For the two conservation groups, work on territory, including land titling, and natural resource management are opportunities for collaborative action. One organisation is experimenting with financial incentives for indigenous people to become involved in conservation. Both organisations noted that work on protected areas is particularly difficult, but that there can be opportunities for collaboration with indigenous groups, if the latter are involved in planning and management.

“Management of resources in indigenous territories - that’s a win-win. Those are places where they have rights over the resources and it’s in both of our interests that they do that as well as possible. So we have been doing forest management with indigenous communities for 10-15 years in Latin America, and in Peru for the last 5-6 and also fishery resources. I think also land-use planning. In a lot of offices we work with indigenous groups to do [organizational life-plans] which usually include a resource-use component, or land-use planning and zoning for their territories. [...] Often large-scale infrastructure projects bring about a lot of changes, direct conversion of a habitat as well as all the changes that come about as a result, like migration. So how do you help indigenous federations manage that change, and prepare for that change? Often that means helping them manage their territories so they can minimise invasions and keep control.” WWF US, Washington.

“Local communities won’t do conservation unless it is beneficial for them. [...] So, coming from that acknowledgement, we are trying to identify, with local communities, what are the things that are beneficial to them that conservation can bring them. We are signing agreements and contracts with them. We commit to give them specific benefits in exchange for them conserving the forest, protecting the fish ponds, or doing the conservation work... Conservation is not for free. It is costing someone, somewhere and it has to be compensated. We are working for conservation and getting a salary for it, so why are we asking communities to do it for free? The conservation stewards programme looks into the different types of benefits that communities are looking for. Sometimes it is non-financial with rights to land or rights to manage. In other places people want money to compensate for conservation actions.” CI. Washington.

One of the conservation organisations is also considering how capacity building of indigenous organisations can help conservation goals:

“For them to be able to manage their own resources this often has a lot of do with capacity building of the organisation and leadership and how they function as representative organisations. We have a mixed experience of that in the region and we are trying to build

up our ability to support these kinds of things. We see we need to strengthen them so they can interface with the companies and the government. That can be challenging, as it's a long-term issue." WWF, Washington.

To sum up, conservation organisations that have an operational presence in areas where indigenous people live do claim to be seeking common ground through work perceived as a 'win-win'. This generally involves issues of territorial demarcation and management and sustainable resource use. Perhaps more problematic is the assumption that through their advocacy work, international NGOs have established a shared agenda with the indigenous organisations they refer to as their partners. Only one organisation openly acknowledged the difficulties involved in directly linking indigenous groups into the advocacy formulating process.

The limits to cooperation at the grassroots level

Despite these statements of good intent at the highest levels, and, at times, the intense involvement of these organisations in lobbying work on Camisea issues, one of the first conclusions of this research study is that they have very little engagement at the grassroots level with those actually affected by the Camisea gas fields. Below two projects are discussed in which it was initially thought there would be potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between the international organisations and COMARU. At the time of the first fieldwork visit, these were the only two examples of sustained INGO project work on the area that COMARU's leaders were able to identify.¹⁹ They involve management of natural resources, and participatory planning and management of protected areas, and therefore fall under the type of work identified by international agencies as having potential for collaboration with indigenous people. This type of involvement at community level in the Urubamba is rare, however, and both these projects faltered amidst serious recriminations.

▪ Participatory planning and management of protected areas

Despite being renowned for a combative attitude when it comes to potential engagement with INGOs, COMARU's history shows some points of convergence. Surprisingly, considering the problems that they have caused between conservationists and indigenous people elsewhere (Cernau and Schmidt 2003), COMARU has been willing to cooperate on the creation of national parks and other protected areas. It is here that some negotiation of common ground appears to have taken place. While there are few records of the processes in COMARU's archives, the organisation gave its support to the creation of the Santuario Nacional Megantoni and the Parque Nacional Otishi, both of which are located near to Machiguenga communities.²⁰ Much of the work to create the Reserva Kugapakori-Nahua took place before the formal establishment of COMARU, but more recently than its 1990 inauguration, Machiguenga communities bordering the Reserve have worked with the NGO Shinai Serjali on participatory mapping of their territories. AIDSEP has also shown support for the creation of parks and protected areas but it has railed against State agencies and environmentalist NGOs whom it accuses of appropriating plans for indigenous management of these zones (AIDSEP 2004). In a similar vein, COMARU appeared happy to cooperate with the creation of the Parque Nacional Otishi in which Conservation International Peru was a key player, and pledged its support for the protected areas as long as

¹⁹ Other NGOs have worked in the area on community mapping, land titling and a degree of institutional strengthening (CEDIA and Shinai Serjali) and on monitoring of company activities (Pro-Naturaleza and ACPC).

²⁰ In an interview with the director of CEDIA, he noted how the organisation had submitted a request in 1984 for the Megantoni area to be protected as it was an area of the utmost cultural and spiritual significance for indigenous groups in the Urubamba region. It would also act, they had hoped, as a barrier to incursions by colonists. It was only in a study undertaken a decade later that the extremely high levels of biodiversity in the area were revealed. Interview carried out by Brian Pratt in August 2006, Lima.

indigenous lands remained inviolate (COMARU 2000). In many ways, having the Lower Urubamba area surrounded by national parks and other protected zones is of great value to the Machiguenga. Creation of these areas involves legal approval by national level state bodies of the territorial boundaries of indigenous communities that are adjacent to the protected areas. This should therefore ensure recognition of indigenous lands at the highest level. Further, being adjacent to protected areas provides an extra layer of legal recourse if loggers or colonists try to encroach on land near to *comunidades nativas*. It also protects the watersheds for the tributaries of the Urubamba and other important rivers. This last point was the main reason given by the ex-leader of COMARU for the original cooperation pledged for the formation of the Parque Nacional Otishi. In this case the livelihoods of nearby Machiguenga communities were given further safeguards through the creation of a Machiguenga communal reserve acting as a type of 'buffer zone' between *comunidades nativas* and the park, into which community members in the area would be able to go to hunt or to collect other natural resources.

COMARU's newsletter of 2000 shows its support for this initiative and documents plans for the early stages of the process, involving the creation of the Machiguenga communal reserve. Conservation International Peru were closely involved in the whole project, having signed an agreement with the World Bank to implement the project, financed by the Global Environment Facility. CI, in turn, would work with/through CEDIA on a participatory mapping process to establish traditional Machiguenga land use patterns and territorial boundaries as well as to identify pilot sustainable income generating activities and to run an environmental education programme.²¹ The newsletter mentions the positive reaction from the communities and echoes COMARU's support for the initiative:

En cada una de las comunidades visitadas se ha notado gran expectativa por la ejecución del proyecto, sobre todo porque es un proyecto donde nosotros seremos los principales protagonistas ... Esperamos que no ocurran trabas, porque para nosotros es una buena posibilidad de consolidar nuestro territorio sobre la base de un Plan de Manejo que estamos construyendo conjuntamente con las instituciones involucradas en este proyecto (COMARU 2000:5).

In each of the communities visited, there were high hopes for the execution of the project, above all because it is a project where we will be the main protagonists ... We hope that it proceeds without hindrances, because it is a good opportunity for us to consolidate our territory based on a Management Plan that we are drawing up jointly with the institutions involved in this project.

Of note here is the 'protagonistic' role that COMARU believed it, and its member communities, would play in the creation of the communal reserve and then in the implementation and monitoring of a management plan for the whole area. This attitude, of the desire to be a major player in this type of initiative, is consistent with the steps AIDSEP has taken to try to ensure greater indigenous control over the management of protected areas.

Despite these positive beginnings, serious incidents occurred during the elaboration of plans for the Parque Nacional Otishi that threatened to halt the whole project, and wrought considerable damage to Conservation International's reputation in Peru and beyond. As noted above, COMARU initially pledged its support for the Park and the Machiguenga Communal Reserve alongside it, and voiced this in its newsletter. Accounts over the process that then followed and the altercations it produced vary. Whilst a representative from Conservation International interviewed in Lima in the first fieldwork visit of this study attempted to downplay the depth of

²¹ The NGO ACPC was responsible for similar work with Ashaninka communities on the Western side of the Park.

anger and distrust that had developed between Conservation International, Peruvian NGOs and indigenous people, denying the principal allegation made against his organisation, other actors and observers recounted corroborating stories that contradict his version. While it was not possible to prove the allegations either way, it is again illustrative of the levels of suspicion between indigenous groups and international conservation NGOs working in the Amazon.

A report by the Rainforest Foundation (2004) commissioned by First Peoples Worldwide condemns the behaviour of Conservation International and gives a full account of the project for the creation of the Park and Communal Reserves from 1998, when CI first became involved. According to this report, there were a series of anomalies surrounding the budgeting and management of the project, but the most serious misdemeanour involved the territorial mapping of indigenous lands adjacent to the Communal Reserves (one Machiguenga and one Ashaninka communal reserve on the Eastern and Western sides of the Park, respectively). The Peruvian NGOs CEDIA and ACPC²² had been involved in a participatory process with indigenous communities to ensure that all the cadastral and land-use surveys were up to date, but this information was allegedly not used by Conservation International in the reports it submitted to INRENA, the national body charged with the oversight of protected areas. As the Rainforest Foundation note,

An analysis of the Geographic Information System (GIS) database produced by the GEF Vilcabamba Programme staff showed that none of the cadastral information provided either by the ACPC or CEDIA was actually used to produce the applications for the Vilcabamba Protected Areas. A review carried out by the ACPC, the *Instituto del Bien Comun* and CEDIA, of the information presented by CI to INRENA, brought to light errors that would have improperly expanded the protected areas by 40,000 hectares, at the expense of indigenous lands. There were subsequent meetings with the state agencies involved in issues of community land registry and the demarcation of protected areas. The indigenous organisations and NGOs supporting the process for creation of the protected areas made these errors known, causing outrage on all sides. CI did not attend these meetings and still does not acknowledge its enormous errors in data interpretation or handling, errors that caused conservation areas to be extended to the detriment of the native communities (The Rainforest Foundation 2004:28).

This version of events was corroborated in interviews undertaken during the first fieldwork visit with CEDIA, ACPC and COMARU.

The Rainforest Foundation report reproduces an interview with a Conservation International staff member originally published by Parks Watch. In it, he asserts that ACPC and CEDIA,

“took advantage of CI’s low profile in the field and its relationship with the communities to achieve their overall objective, which was more territory for the communities” (Rainforest Foundation 2004: 31).

He was also interviewed for this study, and whilst he did not repeat these accusations against ACPC and CEDIA, he flatly denied that CI had ever acted improperly or that there had been any attempts to make the protected areas larger at the expense of the indigenous communities. According to staff of ACPC and COMARU, after CI’s behaviour came to light, a series of meetings were held in the region with representatives of the indigenous communities affected. CEDIA and ACPC showed them the differences between the maps presented by CI to INRENA and those

²² ACPC - Asociación para la Conservación del Patrimonio del Cutivireni (*Association for the Cultural Protection of the Cutivireni Area*) – a Peruvian NGO originally established to work with the Ashaninka people of the Amazon.

drawn up in consultation with communities. At this point, representatives of CI were forcibly ejected from the room by the Machiguenga and Ashaninka groups present. When queried on this, the representative did not deny that it had occurred, but stated that it was 'perfectly normal' for this type of thing to happen. It would appear that the breakdown in relations was so severe, that the only way for the other organisations to get the park established was to exclude CI from any further negotiations, until the mapping and other technical reports were rewritten, submitted and accepted by INRENA (Rainforest Foundation 2004).²³

- **Biodiversity/natural resource management**

Another area of potential convergence and collaboration between indigenous organisations and conservation NGOs is over natural resource management. During the first fieldwork phase of this study, community representatives and COMARU leaders all demonstrated, in meetings, in organisational 'life plans' and community 'SWOT' analysis, their interest in sustainable forest management, and alternative renewable forms of agriculture. While the statutes of the organisation set out one of the aims of the organisation as protecting communities' natural resources, as noted above, the strategic objectives of COMARU involve 'achieving appropriate and sustainable management of natural resources, in terms of both flora and fauna, as the basis for development with identity'. Support for this objective was further reinforced in the COMARU general assembly held in Quillabamba in August 2005, when participants were asked to prioritise thematic areas for future events: training on 'actividades extractivas forestales' (forest-based extractive activities) received the highest number of votes, alongside training on how to negotiate with the state and energy companies.

COMARU leaders have repeatedly expressed a keen interest in receiving external support from NGOs or others with this type of specialist knowledge. The organisation had originally given its blessing to an Oxfam America project along these lines, to work on a pilot project in a number of Machiguenga communities on sustainable resource management. Clearly, COMARU and its member communities believe that sustainable forest management and creation of national parks can be in their interests if there is potential for long-term positive impacts on livelihoods. This interest has facilitated the negotiation, initially at least, of common ground with INGOs on conservation-related issues.

It should be stressed that COMARU has had a fruitful, supportive relationship with Oxfam America for nearly ten years, without which the indigenous organisation may not have survived. However in this particular case, rather than working with or through COMARU, Oxfam staff members had tried to work directly with three Machiguenga communities on a pilot project for a natural resource management programme. According to an Oxfam representative this had been in its initial research phase, in which Oxfam staff working with community members were carrying out a biodiversity audit and monitoring of natural resource use. From this, resource management and development plans would be drawn up. However, rumours began to spread in the communities that Oxfam were involved in 'biopiracy' and were planning to steal indigenous plants and local knowledge in order to patent them overseas. The staff members were forced to halt their work on the project as a result.

The programme coordinator at Oxfam declared that this reaction in the communities was the work of COMARU, that had been influenced by COICA publications passed onto them by AIDSESP.²⁴ According to the leader of COMARU, it was the communities themselves that were questioning

²³ During interviews taken one year later, in July 2006, representatives from CI in both Washington DC and Lima were more open to admit that mistakes had been made in the planning and implementation of work on the Parque Otishi, noting that the individual primarily responsible was no longer working for the organisation.

²⁴ Interview with Oxfam America staff member, Lima 12 July 2005.

the motives of the Oxfam staff, and, furthermore, that they felt that COMARU had been imposing the organisation and agenda upon them.²⁵ While the 'misunderstanding' – to quote the Oxfam staff member – has now been cleared up, and the project continues under the direction of external consultants, this episode is illustrative of the extremely sensitive issues surrounding natural resource use or conservation on indigenous land.

The new model of cooperation?

During the second fieldwork visit it became clear through discussions with the different actors involved that Oxfam America and its relationship with COMARU and the Machiguenga communities have recovered from this setback. The biodiversity management project continues, although its management and direction have been contracted out to a capacity building specialist organisation called Escuela Para el Desarrollo (School for Development). Conservation International suffered more lasting damage from the fiasco over the Parque Otishi, however. Observers suggest that the reputation of the organisation was at its lowest point in Peru at this time, and that the recent work of the organisation in the area west of the park with Ashaninka communities has been largely focused on repairing this damage. But the work of CI and other conservation organisations with indigenous peoples has been more widely criticised over recent years and Otishi was just one of many serious 'misunderstandings' between these different actors across the world. WWF had also suffered setbacks in Peru over its support for logging in permanent production forest concessions, that had been superimposed on indigenous territories. Over the course of the research period, visible shifts were being made within these two organisations to improve their standing with indigenous federations in Peru. This was perhaps also in response to the Chapin article, although in WWF organisational changes predate its publication.

The controversial article by Mac Chapin (2004) discussed in the introductory section, in which he criticises the 'big three' conservation NGOs (CI, WWF and TNC), also makes reference to 'bullying' of indigenous organisations in the Vilcabamba area. This, and other incidences of a breakdown in trust between these INGOs and indigenous organisations lead him to the conclusion that the 'new model' of cooperation, that had been worked out in the Iquitos declaration and that privileged joint working between conservation organisations and indigenous groups has, in the main, failed. He believes that it has now been replaced with the promotion of large-scale conservation programmes and of 'private' conservation areas, that are purchased by pro-conservation organisations and individuals. In the interview carried out with the representative of CI for the purposes of this study, he was asked about the Chapin article. He responded that he had been personally misrepresented and misquoted in it and reiterated the organisation's commitment to working with indigenous people. However, although CI's website and promotional material state that the organisation is working closely with local people and their organisations in the Camisea area, CI currently has no presence in the Lower Urubamba. When questioned on this, he replied that 'projects have a beginning and an end' and that an initiative was undertaken in three Machiguenga communities that lasted for three years. Notwithstanding his claims to the contrary, the website makes no mention of either the start or end dates of the initiative and implies an ongoing engagement in the area. The same information is presented in promotional material (Conservation International nd).

Despite a rejection of Chapin's claims by both Lima staff and a detailed point-by-point refutation of his argument on the organisation's international website, Conservation International did make an attempt to increase its level of interaction with indigenous organisations after the Chapin article was published. A meeting was called by CI in Cusco in early 2005, to which representatives of local, national and international indigenous organisations were invited, including COMARU. In an

²⁵ Interview with COMARU leader, Quillabamba, 23 July 2005.

interview undertaken for this study, the head of COMARU at the time explained how CI had given a presentation of its work, declared an interest in working with indigenous organisations and then offered a document for those present to sign, stating that an understanding on future cooperation had been reached. According to Rivas, none of the indigenous leaders present had been willing to put their names to the document without far greater evidence of CI's sincerity and ability to work with their organisations. When queried on the outcome of this meeting, the CI staff member remarked that it had been 'an honest exchange'. At the time of the interview with Rivas in August 2005, no follow-up communications from CI had been received by COMARU.

The staff member of CI interviewed in their Washington headquarters the following year was much more willing to speak openly about the difficulties that CI had experienced in Peru in its work with indigenous groups. Whilst lauding current programmes with the Ashaninka, she noted that the manner in which a former staff member had acted over the planning process for the Parque Otishi had been 'horrible'. It seems the organisation had underestimated the hostility felt towards it on the part of some of the indigenous participants at the meeting held in Cusco.

"There is a lot of mistrust between the local and national groups...The meeting quickly revealed that we were not looking at the issues surrounding a common agenda as seriously as we should, and that if we really wanted an indigenous policy we should consult with them, and if we want common agendas, we should be serious about building something at the very local level to bring it up to the regional level, rather than the other way around. [...] That was one of the conclusions from the meeting. And also a review of these statements that CI is making about working with indigenous people. And this should be done in the field, in consultation with local groups. The idea is so the next time we have a discussion with different groups we don't get hammered the way we did in Cusco." CI, Washington

It is clear that CI has a lot of ground to cover if it is to build up constructive relationships with indigenous federations in Peru. Although there is now an 'indigenous initiative' within CI that is seeking to build up understanding within headquarters of best practice for engaging with indigenous groups, the staff member interviewed acknowledged that at present, 'CI has no indigenous policy' and that the document entitled 'Principles for Partnership' that is posted on the website was drawn up in response to a query from a board member, rather than through any broader or more thoughtful consultation process. The indigenous initiative is now holding a series of meetings with indigenous groups around the world (of which the event in Cusco was one) although the process does appear to have stalled in South America.

WWF has also had difficulties reconciling its forest conservation work with indigenous groups in Peru. However, they have a longer history of interaction with the national level federation AIDSESEP, and, furthermore, a representative interviewed during the first fieldwork visit to Lima was willing to speak openly of the problems her organisation had faced when working to promote sustainable forest management with logging companies in the Amazon. She acknowledged that the use of out-of-date and inaccurate maps had meant that the logging concessions on which they were working were superimposed over indigenous territories. This had caused significant problems between WWF and indigenous organisations at all levels. However, the organisation had taken steps to attempt to rectify the problem, and at the time of the first visit was negotiating a more specific plan of action seeking a 'more holistic way of working with indigenous peoples'.²⁶ The attitude of WWF at the institutional level also appears to differ from that of CI in the aftermath of Mac Chapin's article. Whilst WWF also declares that the piece is much exaggerated they are happy to debate it, and have made copies of it available in Spanish in their Lima offices. They have also taken steps to deepen their relationship with AIDSESEP: the two organisations first

²⁶ Interview in WWF, Lima, 11 August 2005.

signed a general memorandum of understanding in 2002, with a second in 2003. By the time of the second fieldwork visit, they had just negotiated an agreement on a more specific programme of work with AIDSESEP, with funding from the UK's Department for International Development, that focuses on natural resource use in indigenous territories. One objective of the project is to help bring AIDSESEP into national level discussions with the government and multilateral development banks on natural resource use. The second objective is to carry out five research case studies on indigenous federations that have been affected by deterioration of natural resources as a result of large-scale extractive industry. These five federations will also receive capacity building and training support on how to engage with energy and logging companies. One of the federations that has been chosen to receive this support is COMARU.

During fieldwork interviews in July 2005, one observer expressed scepticism as to the durability of the relationship between AIDSESEP and WWF, given that in June 2004, it (along with other large conservation organisations) was denounced by AIDSESEP in a press release in which it was accused of trying to 'controlar y administrar grandes extensiones de bosques tropicales húmedos' – 'control and manage large areas of tropical rainforest' (COICA 2005: 177). In an interview held in July 2006, the recently elected leader of AIDSESEP attempted to distance himself from WWF. He declared his intention to steer AIDSESEP and its federated members back towards the original guiding themes of the organisation, namely defence of indigenous rights and the recuperation of ancestral lands. When asked about the agreements with WWF, he responded with reference to their work on the establishment of protected areas and national parks:

“¿Cómo puede ser socio de una organización que ha quitado territorio de nuestros hermanos? No es nuestro aliado. ¿Parques para quién, para qué?”

How is it possible to be a partner of an organisation that has taken away territory from our brothers? It is not our ally. Parks for whom, for what?

Despite this refutation, he did acknowledge that AIDSESEP could gain skills from WWF in terms of land mapping with georeferencing, and dominating the technical knowledge needed to be able to negotiate with government officials. However, other more optimistic observers would see the memorandum as an example of a growing awareness amongst conservation NGOs that engagement with indigenous people is a prerequisite to any conservation work on ancestral territories.

While some observers are optimistic about WWF's rapprochement towards indigenous federations, and see it as recognition on their part that engagement from conservationists must go beyond position statements and vague policy documents of good intent, it is clear that AIDSESEP's relationships with conservation organisations are volatile and unpredictable. The tensions and sensitivities over conservation, natural resource management and indigenous land use are compounded by the unequal power dynamics inherent in external funding arrangements. Strict planning, accounting and reporting procedures on the part of the INGO may well clash with the indigenous federation's insistence on the centrality of its own role in the decisions that will affect the livelihoods of their members. It remains to be seen whether WWF and AIDSESEP do indeed find common ground over the next few years as their formal relationship deepens.

Staff interviewed in both DC and Lima acknowledged that this move towards capacity building and closer work with indigenous federations is very new to them. 'We are biologists' remarked one representative, but he also noted that there were people in the organisation who were willing to learn and to change. Furthermore, staff members in Lima saw a clear shift in the policy of the organisation towards its work with indigenous groups since its establishment in Peru. WWF now works on land titling, which traditionally conservation organisations have not been keen to do, and has reduced its focus on creating protected areas. These are examples of a conservation

organisation renegotiating its priorities so as to be able to find common ground with indigenous organisations.

“Cuando WWF llegó al Perú, empezamos con una óptica cien por ciento de conservación, con las ecorregiones. Identificamos áreas importantes, pero en el curso de implementación empezamos a darnos cuenta de dos elementos claves: los bosques podrían ser trabajados como bosques de producción. Otro, las tierras indígenas, que podrían ser apoyadas como oportunidades para conservación por un lado, y por otro para fortalecimiento institucional. Hicimos lo más fácil, y empezamos a trabajar con los bosques. Pero en el camino encontramos oportunidades y problemas interesantes con el tema indígena. Trabajando con grupos indígenas con los bosques, comenzamos a entender mucho más sobre conservación de los bosques que meramente la cobertura forestal. Temas de cultura, usos múltiples de los bosques... Como consecuencia reconocimos otros actores válidos en el proceso. La evolución del pensamiento del enfoque de áreas protegidas, de los buffers, y cuestiones de manejo forestal a una visión más amplia en términos conceptuales y geográficos que implica trabajar con socios que están allí y con su propia problemática que no es ajeno a lo nuestro. No es que estamos usando a los indígenas para nuestra agenda. Creo que tenemos puntos comunes en nuestra agenda que nos llevan a obtener oportunidades beneficiosas para ambos.” WWF Perú.

When WWF arrived in Peru we started off with a vision that was one hundred percent about conservation, based on eco-regions. We identified important areas, but as we were implementing [these projects] we became aware of two key issues: forests can be worked as forests in permanent production. Also, indigenous lands could be supported as opportunities for conservation and for institutional strengthening. We took the easiest option and began to work with forests. But on the way we found interesting opportunities and challenges surrounding indigenous issues. Working on forests with indigenous groups, we began to understand much more about forest conservation than just forest cover. Themes of culture, multiple uses of the forest...As a result, we recognised that there were other valid actors in the whole process. The development of our thinking about protected areas, buffer zones, questions of forest management towards a wider conceptual and geographic vision, implies working with partners who are on the ground, and who have their own set of problems that are not so different from ours. We are not using indigenous people to serve the purposes of our own agenda. I think that we have issues on our agenda in common, which will lead to benefits for both parties.

This type of policy statement does appear to be more than just rhetoric: one further interesting step that had been taken by WWF by the time of the second fieldwork visit to Lima was the appointment of a former president of AIDSESEP as adviser on indigenous issues. In an interview in which the director of WWF Perú and another staff member were also present, he declared himself open to a mutual learning process between himself and the organisation, but was clear that at any point this relationship could cease, were the priorities of indigenous peoples to be compromised. He declared both his caution over the arrangement, and his priority to indigenous rights over conservation issues through a contrast of two metaphors: the ‘heart of a panda’, a reference to the WWF logo, and the heart as a bow, ready to shoot an arrow.

“Mi estaba acá como colaborador en WWF – no es que yo tenga un corazón de panda. Mi corazón es con la flecha lista para disparar, como indígena, pero ¿en qué momento lo hacemos? No podemos hacerlo mientras podemos trabajar en alianzas, mientras podemos entender qué es la globalización, y el mundo hacia dónde camina. Tenemos que compartir fuerzas. Así que si a pesar de eso, no funciona el mecanismo de alianzas,

y nos damos cuenta que hay organizaciones que utilicen a los indígenas, ese día decimos, 'ya, chau'."

My time here as a WWF collaborator – it's not because I have the heart of a panda. My heart is ready to shoot an arrow, like an indigenous person. But when will we shoot that arrow? There is no point doing that whilst we can still work in alliance, whilst we can learn about globalization, about where the world is headed. We have to join forces. But, if in spite of all this, working in alliance fails, and we realise that there are organisations using indigenous people, then we'll say, 'that's it, bye'.

Similar caution was voiced by the leader of COMARU, when asked in July 2006 about the agreement that he had recently signed between the indigenous organisation and WWF for training for members of COMARU's leadership. He expressed concern about WWF's problematic history with other indigenous federations, using a metaphor of a fishing hook, with which WWF might try to reel them in with this first project, and then introduce different types of projects that could jeopardise the security of Machiguenga communities.

"Era con cierto recelo que firmé el convenio. Qué no sea un anzuelo – que firmamos un convenio para hacer talleres y luego vienen con concesiones forestales. Hay mucha gente que me han dicho que no trabaje con ellos. Tienen mala fama en otros lugares."

It was with certain reluctance that I signed the agreement. Let us hope that this is not a hook – that we sign an agreement to do workshops, and then they come in with forestry concessions. Lots of people have told me not to work with them. They have a bad reputation in other areas.

He declared that signing with them was a risk and that it might in the end bring them difficulties.

The leader's clarity of his aims for COMARU, and his insistence that the organisation would stay focused on projects and programmes entirely centred on the Machiguenga's own priorities came to the fore during his discussion of a recent meeting with a group of NGO 'friends'. In the same interview in July 2006, he recalled that he had said to them:

"Si ustedes están trabajando las mismas líneas que trabajamos, entonces bien. Sino, no. Nada de agendas propias."

If you are working on the same issues as us, then good. Otherwise, no. None of that private agendas stuff.

He explained that he had taken this line because it was inevitable that more companies were going to be working in the Urubamba region and COMARU needed more support than ever. This attitude highlights the problems faced by COMARU, such as their urgent need for external support in the face of considerable threats from energy companies and colonists, but at the same time recognition that few of those who have an interest in working in the region are motivated by the defense of indigenous rights and territory. While over the years 2004-06 there does appear to have been some attempt on the part of conservation NGOs to rethink their approach towards work with indigenous groups, the troubled history of such engagement remains an issue of continuing concern. The following section maps out the way in which COMARU has historically limited cooperation with external actors to try to avoid cooptation.

COMARU: a history of cautious involvement

COMARU's leader's challenge to potential NGO partners, and the examples of projects discussed above suggest that COMARU and the Machiguenga communities it represents are strong enough to challenge the activities and attitudes of external actors when they perceive that collaboration is no longer in their interests. This can be both a rejection of initiatives that are too centred on biodiversity conservation, or that are thought to wrest power and influence away from the organisation.²⁷

COMARU has a long history of caution with regards to partnerships with other actors, particularly NGOs. For example, most notably, COMARU refused to cooperate in the Programa de Monitoreo Ambiental Comunitario (PMAC – Community Environmental Monitoring Programme) that up until 2004 was implemented by Pro-Naturaleza in the Lower and Upper Urubamba with funds from PlusPetrol.²⁸ Pro-Naturaleza failed to win a renewal of its contract for work in the Lower Urubamba in 2004 and is now only responsible for the Upper Urubamba, although it has a contract with TGP for monitoring of the pipeline right of way in both areas. The PlusPetrol-funded PMAC has now been taken on by the organisation ACPC in the Lower Urubamba. ACPC originally started out as an organisation working to protect the rights of the Ashaninka in the nearby Selva Central, who were severely affected by the activities of the Shining Path during the 1990s.

Pro-Naturaleza's management of the PMAC in the Lower Urubamba from 2002-04 has been profoundly criticised by a wide range of actors in Peru. In interviews with representatives of other NGOs in Lima it was declared to be 'without legitimacy', 'doing propaganda for the companies' and 'hiding information, even from the company itself, to avoid creating waves'. In its defence, the director of Pro-Naturaleza (*Pro-Nature*) explained that it has always been the organisation's policy to attempt to create a bridge between companies and local communities, so as to mitigate negative environmental impacts and maintain productive relationships between different actors. This stance will inevitably bring them into conflict with other more radical organisations. As a result, the activities of the PMAC monitors involved accompanying PlusPetrol's own environmental monitoring activities, and filling in forms on the company's adherence to its own codes of conduct (on river traffic, treatment of wastewater from camps etc) rather than 'causing a scandal'.²⁹ However, both past and present COMARU leaders referred to serious shortcomings of the early PMAC that were more insidious than a desire to maintain cordial relationships with the companies. They alleged that Pro-Naturaleza failed to behave in a transparent fashion and to

²⁷ COMARU's defiance has also been shown in its negotiations with PlusPetrol, at a time when a grant of US \$105 000 was in the balance (nearly three times the annual funding received from Oxfam). The grant was to enlarge the Casa Machiguenga and support university students from the Upper and Lower Urubamba. Negotiations were prolonged, since COMARU rejected a clause in the contract that would have prevented the organisation from making public any information about company wrongdoing that came to COMARU's attention. COMARU's resolve eventually proved successful. It has also more recently negotiated funding from PlusPetrol to pay for COMARU's directors to visit the organisation's member communities, as these activities are no longer covered by Oxfam funding. However, COMARU has been criticised (by AIDSESP and others) for taking money from PlusPetrol. It has also signed agreements for US \$70 000 with TGP, which if anything is more controversial still, considering the company's record of safety standards, environmental damage and threatening and intimidating behaviour in communities. Whilst acknowledging the problems involved in taking money from the energy companies, current and former leaders of COMARU say that without adequate levels of funding from NGOs, they are forced to negotiate funding from the companies. This dilemma is discussed in the case study below.

²⁸ Pro-Naturaleza is a Peruvian environmentally focused NGO, that receives the majority of its funding from international conservation NGOs. While it has counted on WWF funding in the past, its current principal funder is The Nature Conservancy.

²⁹ Interview with director of Pro-Naturaleza, Lima, 10 August 2005.

disseminate information and that a fuel spill in 2003 was not reported, even to the companies. These are reasons, post-facto that in a sense validate COMARU's decision not to be formally involved in the PMAC in the Lower Urubamba during the Pro-Naturaleza phase (although COMARU member communities were involved). Nevertheless, COMARU has always been involved in the PMAC of the Upper Urubamba, where it is the only indigenous organisation. This may provide a clue to their initial refusal and current reluctant cooperation in the Lower Urubamba, where cooperation means COMARU's influence over the process is diluted by CECONAMA and FECONAYY.

Although COMARU is now formally involved in the PMAC of the Lower Urubamba, there is some disagreement within the organisation as to how this decision was made, and if it was in fact taken without due consultation with other leaders and members. While the involvement of COMARU has been flagged as the principal achievement of ACPC's running of the PMAC to date, and a very rare example of joint work between all three indigenous organisations in the region, (with CECONAMA and FECONAYY) COMARU continues to voice its unease with the arrangements. With CEDIA, COMARU has designed an alternative monitoring system, for which they demand independent funding. Clearly, taking money from the company for a monitoring programme of the company's own activities is problematic and raises questions as to whether the programme can provide a thorough, transparent and unbiased oversight of the impacts of its working practices. This idiosyncrasy has been pointed out by a number of other organisations and their reservations with the very fundamentals of the PMAC were recorded by Pro-Naturaleza in their report on activities (Pro-Naturaleza 2003). ACPC has also acknowledged this inherent problem, and stresses that it has taken great care to explain to each community chief that they should view the monitor as working for the community's own management committee (and that they can dismiss the monitor if they are unhappy with their work) even though their salaries are being paid by the company.

This approach has more resonance with that being demanded by COMARU and CEDIA. These organisations want to see a more central role for the *comunidades nativas* and their members in the monitoring process, rather than a situation where monitors are paid for carrying out routine tasks such as filling out forms or gathering water and soil samples. They argue that by placing responsibility for monitoring with those who have already shown themselves to be committed to the welfare of the community (teachers, forest guards, chiefs and elected officials) the monitoring process is more likely to benefit the Machiguenga, rather than the company. This would avoid the situation where monitors carry out their tasks simply as a way to earn money. There is in the current PMAC a greater effort to increase the interaction between the communities and the monitors. However, one observer has described COMARU's role in the programme as 'marginal' and 'subordinate'. Were the heads of the communities given a greater role, as COMARU have been insisting, the organisation would, by dint of its relationships with community leaders, come to have greater sway over the process. This is made clear in CEDIA's proposal for an alternative monitoring scheme (CEDIA 2004) that seeks to revitalise the 'brigadas de vigilancia' (watch brigades) that were first set up during the Shell era of the mid-1990s. CEDIA argues that this plan would also help train up a new generation of leaders within COMARU. The proposal calls for the incorporation of monitoring activities as part of the standard business of the *comunidades nativas* and contrasts this with the isolation of the monitors under the PMAC scheme. The rationale for this difference of approach is given as follows:

Para la experiencia de las Brigadas de Vigilancia estos 'líderes' del Monitoreo no pueden ni deben ser otros más que las mismas autoridades comunales, de esta forma no se estaría creando otra instancia transitoria que lejos de fortalecer o consolidar la organización en diferentes campos, se estaría limitando su accionar, sobre todo en aspectos que son necesarios [a fin de] ejercer mayor control y fiscalización (CEDIA 2004: 12).

Based on the experience of the Vigilance Brigades, these Monitoring 'leaders' cannot and should not be anyone other than the communal authorities. Otherwise, we will be creating a transitory body that, rather than strengthening or consolidating the organisation in various areas, will be limiting its ability to act, above all in those aspects which are necessary for exercising greater levels of control and supervision.

The reasons for COMARU's initial refusal to become involved in the Pro-Naturaleza PMAC are various. At play, it appears, were the rivalries between the indigenous organisations, and allegedly, the desire of CEDIA to maintain its position as a powerful player in the region, through its close collaboration with the leadership of COMARU. There is no evidence to suggest that COMARU rejected Pro-Naturaleza's PMAC because of any pro-conservation agenda. It seems more likely that it was a rejection of a programme in such a sensitive area that failed to put indigenous organisations centre stage.

Without the benefit of adequate documentation or longer-term fieldwork, it is difficult to be sure of the reasons behind COMARU's strategic decisions, particularly those taken longer ago. However, there is documented evidence from the mid 1990s that illustrates an unease amongst communities and COMARU leaders over the influence of NGOs on their organisation, as increasing numbers of external agents became interested in the Lower Urubamba.

The following analysis is drawn from interviews undertaken by members of RAP – Red Ambiental Peruana, or Peruvian Environmental Network. Headed at this point by DESCO, a Lima-based research institute, they had been hired by Shell to carry out social and environmental impact monitoring during the exploratory and construction phases of the Camisea gas extraction process, from 1996 until the Shell pullout in 1998. Eight visits were made in total, with the principal investigators leading the visits each time, occasionally accompanied by other experts. They interviewed community members as well as the leaders of COMARU, CECONAMA and FECONAYY. These interviews are transcribed in the reports, some of which also provide analysis and a summary of findings.

The second report, covering the monitoring visit in August 1997, documents signs of growing tensions between the indigenous federations in the area. COMARU was refusing to join the planned 'comisión indígena' which would have acted as the body through which the communities of the Lower Urubamba were to negotiate compensation with Shell. COMARU resisted plans for the three indigenous organisations to have equal representation on the committee, arguing that the number of seats should be proportional to the number of communities represented by each organisation. This would have given COMARU far greater leverage over the Commission. According to the then head of FECONAYY, this approach was orchestrated by CEDIA.

“Lo que pasa es que hay un organismo que se llama CEDIA y que maneja a COMARU y a ellos no les parece bien la Comisión... Eso es lo que yo entiendo porque lo que esa organización quiere es manejar el Urubamba. La FECONAYY y CECONAMA son federaciones antiguas, la COMARU es nueva, recién como cinco años tiene.” (Cited in De Weck and Cardich 1997: 20)

What's happening is that there is an organisation called CEDIA that controls COMARU, and they don't think that the Commission is a good idea. This is what I understand, because this organisation [CEDIA] wants to control the Urubamba area. FECONAYY and CECONAMA are established federations. COMARU is new. It's only about five years old.

He believed that CEDIA's creation and subsequent funding of COMARU had led to divisions between the Machiguenga, since CEDIA would give orders to COMARU, and 'el billete manda' -

'money talks' (Ibid: 22). There are also criticisms, by the same informants, of NGOs that concentrate on territory and property rights, and neglect issues of small-scale farming or other livelihood strategies.

This wariness and criticism of NGOs was also noted in COMARU at the time. The third report, from February 1998 (De Weck and Cardich 1998a), includes a short interview with the head of the organisation. He had expressed an interest in joining the RAP team on their monitoring visit, but had had to cancel at the last moment. The monitors record that this was because his own community was demanding his return to explain why he was making so many overseas visits and not reporting back afterwards. Representatives of COMARU were making similar requests.

También lo estaban convocando representantes de COMARU, aparentemente por razones similares. Por lo tanto sentía que habiendo perdido el apoyo y la confianza de sus bases, no era la persona mas indicada para participar en el Monitoreo'(De Weck and Cardich 1998a: 8.).

Representatives of COMARU were also asking him to meet with them, apparently for similar reasons. As such he felt that he had lost the support and trust of his constituents, and that he was not the right person to be involved in the monitoring.

The authors of the report also note that this individual was very critical of Shell's activities in the area, and had been to Washington and London to put forward his views on the environmental aspects of the project. They record that it was, however, at precisely this moment that he lost the support of the other members of COMARU. By the time of the fourth visit, in May 1998, he had been removed from his position as head of COMARU. It was implied, by observers in the area and his successor, that he had acted against the interests of his own community.

The suggestion is that this former leader was removed from his position within COMARU because of too great an involvement with external actors and their activities related to Camisea in Lima and overseas. Achieving a balance between making alliances with or negotiating financial support from external actors whilst remaining attuned to the needs of the communities at the grassroots is a constant challenge for the leadership of COMARU. During the first fieldwork visit for this study, a COMARU leader was again removed from office. He had ignored a decision made by COMARU's member communities and executive committee so as to strike a deal with PlusPetrol. While it is not clear whether or not he gained personally from this move, he later declared that he had done so since COMARU was not benefiting in any significant way from its alliances with NGOs. Others saw his decision as an abuse of power and evidence that he had lost his 'indigeness' as a result of too great an exposure to 'western' ways of life in Lima and overseas where he travelled courtesy of both NGOs and the energy consortium. 'Se ambicionó mucho. Perdió su identidad de indígena' – He got very ambitious and lost his identity as an indigenous person.³⁰ The 'contamination' of indigenous leaders who are seen by their own people to be too closely associated with NGOs is illustrated in the case study of the Public Hearings in a separate section below.

Tensions and ambiguities surrounding involvement with NGOs had been noted in Machiguenga communities as early as 1998. The following statement was made by a *comunera* in the Comunidad Nativa Kirigueti:

"Hay muchas ONGs que han venido, incluso hemos tenido entrevistas, de tal manera hasta ahora no sabemos si hay resultado o no. Vinieron, nos pidieron información, se van, ahora ustedes vienen otra vez y se van. No sabemos si son de diferentes ONGs o es la

³⁰ Interview with an official in a state-sponsored body, 21 July 2005.

misma. De hecho, por gusto hablamos y de repente no le hacen llegar la información. No tenemos ni copia” (De Weck and Cardich 1998b:31).

Lots of NGOs have been here, and we have done interviews as well, but we still don't know if there will be any outcome of this or not. They came, they asked for information and then they left. Now you lot are coming here and will go away again. We don't know if it's the same NGOs or different ones. In fact, it seems as though we talk just for the sake of talking, and perhaps the information doesn't get passed on. We don't even have a copy [of the information recorded].

The interviewers note that in general the community members in Kirigueti:

manifiestan primero su confusión y luego su preocupación ante la llegada de muchas personas de diferentes instituciones acompañadas siempre con personal de Shell, a los que han tenido que repetir sus necesidades y problemas, pero que no se concretan hasta ahora en un apoyo (De Weck and Cardich 1998b: 11).

display first of all their confusion and then their anxiety about the arrival of many people from different organisations, always accompanied by Shell staff, to whom they have to repeat their needs and problems, but which, to date, has not produced any concrete forms of support.

Although the above is perhaps just a case of wariness amongst community members of outsiders in general, the comments of these *comuneros* show an underlying concern as to the future impact of this type of contact. This cautious approach is also visible in the way in which COMARU has managed its alliances with NGOs over the past decade, confounding initiatives to bring greater proximity to the working relations of the indigenous organisations in the region. Central to COMARU's behaviour appears to be the desire, on the part of COMARU leaders and advisors, to remain autonomous and, crucially, the principal indigenous actor in the region. Despite these attempts to maintain control over the organisation's development, and to ensure for itself a key role in external initiatives in the Urubamba, there are certain areas of INGO activity over which it has very little sway, as will be discussed in the next section.

Cooptation at a distance

Grassroots reality vs. high level advocacy

The discussion above would suggest that COMARU is able to resist cooptation on the ground. However, as the following discussion will show, although it maintains a distance from locally based projects that it does not see as in the best interests of its members, it cannot prevent cooptation at a distance. It is on the websites of international NGOs, in their publications and public statements that COMARU, or its name, is used to put forward agendas that are not necessarily its own.

Whilst in the 1980s and 1990s NGOs were regarded as the ‘magic bullet’ for poverty reduction and promotion of sustainable livelihoods through their perceived ability to work at the grassroots, this honeymoon period is now over. In the current climate where their efficiency and legitimacy is in question, non-governmental actors are increasingly under pressure to prove that they have the support from local actors in the areas where they work. This has spread to conservation NGOs as well, whose actions are increasingly criticised by the likes of Chapin³¹ for their Western-led agendas on biodiversity conservation and the negative impacts of this and of the creation of protected areas on local populations. As such, it has become crucial for these actors to show that they are working in close collaboration with indigenous peoples. We would argue that this has led INGOs to exaggerate greatly the extent of their work with indigenous federations. Indeed, this research was originally premised on the notion that there were considerable levels of such interaction between INGOs and the indigenous movement. This was derived from a reading of organisations’ websites. It was only once in Peru that the researchers found that in the case of COMARU there was actually very little external support, either technical or financial, for their activities and that NGO collaborative work at the local level was even more limited.

During interviews with Peruvian NGOs, the organisation Shinai Serjali was repeatedly referred to as the NGO with the most significant local presence. Its staff members often spend several months at a time in the Amazon, working with local communities on mapping territories and resource use. The commitment and dedication of its staff to their work in the field were seen as a something almost extraordinary in the Peruvian context. CEDIA was also praised for its long years of work on the mapping of indigenous territory.

However, it would appear that the work of these two organisations in the field is appropriated by other, larger actors, that have not committed time and resources to working at the grassroots level. When asked to give examples of the work being undertaken in the region, a representative of CI-Peru stated that his organisation never worked directly in communities, and that they had been working through ‘local’ organisations. These turned out to be CEDIA and Shinai Serjali. CEDIA, although staffed by Peruvians, is a Lima-based organisation, whilst Shinai Serjali is also based in Lima and its original founders were four British anthropologists. Neither organisation would claim to be local, in any sense of the word. References to working with CEDIA presumably refer to the Parque Nacional Otishi discussed above. A member of Shinai flatly denied that her organisation was working with Conservation International, and the only collaboration that she could imagine that the CI representative was referring to was the fact that both organisations sit on the loosely formed ‘grupo de interés sobre Camisea’ – Camisea interest group. She declared that CI was one of the organisations that ‘used their name’ for its own purposes.

This complaint, that the name of an organisation is used by others to support external agendas, was echoed frequently by the current and previous leaders of COMARU. A CI staff member in

³¹ See also Dowie (1995), Cernau and Schmit (2003) and Rainforest Foundation (2004).

Lima also claimed that his organisation was working with COMARU and supporting them through its lobbying work with the Camisea interest group. The leader of COMARU also denied that CI worked with them, stating 'Ni los conozco. Nunca han venido aquí a presentarse' – I don't even know them. They have never come here to introduce themselves. The commitment of CI to the work of the interest group is not in question here, but its actions are rarely, if ever, communicated to those who are potentially impacted by them at the community level. Meanwhile, a variety of organisations claim to be working with COMARU, while the organisation itself struggles with weak internal capacity, manipulation by energy companies and poor communications with its members. All these problems are exacerbated by severe financial constraints.

The only international organisation that has maintained support over a significant period of time for COMARU is Oxfam America, perhaps because of its commitment to indigenous rights in the face of incursions on territory by external agents, over and above concern for biodiversity conservation. One former staff member of Oxfam who has considerable experience of working with the Machiguenga stressed the complexity of the situation in the Lower Urubamba, where COMARU must represent its members who want to benefit from employment offered by the companies and local development through reinvestment of royalties by the government. This means COMARU cannot and will not reject outright the presence of energy companies on indigenous territory in the Amazon, although it has also had to maintain an almost constant fight for adequate compensation for communities, and for environmental precautions on the part of the companies. As the Oxfam representative pointed out, it is much easier for external actors to present their arguments in a non-nuanced, 'black and white' way, either firmly in favour of 'development, civilisation and progress' (the line of CONAP with CECONAMA and FECONAYY)³² or one of outright condemnation of extractive activities in the Amazon. This last position is closest to that taken by AmazonWatch, which has collaborated occasionally with COMARU over the past five years. This collaboration has taken the form of small one-off grants for the purchase of audiovisual equipment and occasional workshops, and to cover trips to Lima and the US for COMARU leaders. While the organisation's director states that AmazonWatch is focused both on indigenous rights and conservation, press releases and position statements on the website suggest that their principal focus is on lobbying against US energy company presence in the Amazon.

The statement made to the press by an AmazonWatch coordinator on the day of the inauguration of the Camisea gas plant is illustrative of the differences underlying the approaches of her organisation and that of COMARU. The coordinator of Amazon Watch's regional campaign is quoted as saying that the Camisea project is a 'defeat for indigenous communities' (Landauro 2004). This contrasts quite markedly with COMARU's leader's speech on the same occasion which was posted on AmazonWatch's own website. His stance is considerably more moderate, acknowledging the benefits that Camisea will bring to the nation as a whole. He states, 'It is for this reason that the Machiguenga people have watched the project with great hope and expectation'.³³ Without giving either explicit support or condemnation of the project, COMARU's leaders have repeatedly voiced the desire of member communities to benefit from Camisea, for their 'tan ansiado desarrollo' – the development that they long for (COMARU 2000: 1).

Deseamos ...sobre todo, que si este proyecto se ejecuta para traer desarrollo, queremos ver desarrollo en nuestras comunidades y no más conflictos y más pobreza como hasta ahora hemos visto (COMARU 2002b).

³² See for example CECONAMA et al. (2003).

³³ Speech translated and posted on www.amazonwatch.org. Accessed 8 September 2004.

Above all, we wish that if this project is indeed going to bring development, that we see development in our own communities, and an end to conflict and poverty, which is what we have seen up until now.

COMARU has explicitly criticised the government and companies for exploiting the wealth of the region without putting anything back.

Ahora que las Empresas vienen ejecutando sus trabajos, y nos dicen que es para impulsar el desarrollo nacional, nos parece una burla, sentimos como que se va a llevar toda nuestra leña para hacer una tremenda fogata afuera, para que todo se illumine, se genere energía, y la gente en la ciudad vive mejor, mientras tanto nosotros quedamos sin recursos, seguimos en la oscuridad, sin energía, pobres, pero también somos parte de la sociedad nacional. El Estado nos dice que nos vamos a beneficiar con el Canon, pero esto nadie lo entiende, lo único que sabemos es que según la experiencia los sitios de donde se vienen extrayendo recursos como gas y petróleo...sus poblaciones siguen pobres y postrados en el olvido, eso no quisieramos que suceda en nuestras comunidades (COMARU 2002).

Now that the companies are carrying out their work, and telling us that it will drive national development, it seems to us like a joke. We feel as though they are going to take away all our firewood to make a huge bonfire somewhere else, so that everything is lit up, energy is generated and the people in the cities live better, whilst we carry on without resources, in the darkness, poor and without energy. But we are also part of national society. The State says that we will benefit from royalties, but no one understands what this is all about. The only thing we know is that, as experience tells us, in other places where resources like gas and oil are being extracted...local populations remain poor and forgotten. We do not want this to happen in our communities.

In sum, COMARU's approach must be pragmatic. The organisation and its members do not have the luxury of an idealised position that can be taken by those not directly impacted by the project. Camisea is a reality, and the Machiguenga must find a way of living with it in a way that is to their best advantage. This position perhaps reflects the fact that although COMARU has used the strategies of social movements to protest against the energy companies and denounce aspects of their behaviour, the organisation did not come into being as a social movement pitted against gas extraction in the Camisea region. As well as mobilising vociferous protest against pollution in Machiguenga territory, COMARU as a representative organisation must also take into consideration the longer-term needs and development interests of its member communities. Investment of royalties from gas extraction may be the only way to fund the schools, medical posts and power supplies that Machiguenga *comuneros* wish for their communities. COMARU cannot condemn outright the extraction of energy resources in the Lower Urubamba, and as a result, will not be entirely aligned with campaigns to prevent large scale resource extraction in the Amazon.

Advocacy work: Finding a common agenda?

When COMARU has a particular complaint about the environmental consequences of the companies' presence (for example, fuel spills, rupture of the gas pipeline, reduction in fish numbers, scarcity of game, erosion along the pipeline right of way) it is able, in the words of one observer, to use AmazonWatch as a 'loud speaker'. Most recently, in order to be able to call a meeting of COMARU's executive to remove the leader from his position (after he struck a deal with PlusPetrol against the wishes of the membership and executive committee) the then deputy chief was able to get resources from AmazonWatch to fund this. But COMARU leaders also complain against the sporadic and limited nature of this cooperation and have criticised the

organisation for thinking it has the right to use the name of COMARU in its lobbying work without express permission. In its defence, AmazonWatch is a small outfit, with a remit to focus on lobbying work in the US where it can obtain most leverage. In an interview, the director of the organisation stated that AmazonWatch's loyalty is to the indigenous communities and that their focus is on rights. However, she admitted that it would cause the organisation a 'dilemma' were communities to decide that they wanted to cooperate fully with the companies and, for example, ask for infrastructure to be built on communal land.³⁴

There are therefore limits to the consensus and common front that COMARU can build up with international NGOs with some form of environmental remit. Furthermore, there is a tendency amongst AmazonWatch and other organisations concerned with lobbying against gas extraction in Camisea to exaggerate events on the ground, a problem which is exacerbated by their infrequent and brief visits to the region. This desire for headline grabbing revelations of lax environmental practices by international energy corporations can be damaging to COMARU and its cause when these accusations are not carefully researched and verified. They can easily be quashed by the companies' lawyers, as the record of a meeting posted on the Camisea consortium's website shows. AmazonWatch had raised the issue of forced contact between the subcontractor for seismic testing, Veritas, and isolated indigenous peoples. However, the way in which they presented this information allowed the company to quash the accusation with the following rebuff:

Once again the NGO AmazonWatch presents an inaccurate, incomplete and distorted information about the presumable behavior of Pluspetrol and its contractor Veritas, concerning the 3D seismic activities.³⁵

One observer in an NGO in Peru referred to an alleged spill of fuel from a 'bladder' which was picked up by Amazon Watch, and given prominence in their lobbying campaign, which had apparently never happened. It is not possible here to establish the facts behind these allegations, but these problems illustrate the difficulties of carrying out lobbying on specific issues without a strong presence in the field. For example, the head of AmazonWatch remarked in an interview that the Machiguenga were 'suffering, dieing and drowning' as a direct result of the Camisea project. Whilst there have been significant social, health and cultural impacts on the Machiguenga, this statement is an exaggeration. To date, only one death can be attributed to the latest phase of the Camisea project (from the mid 1990s), that of a child in Kirigueti, who was swept into the Urubamba in the wake of a company-owned boat.

This tendency of exaggeration amongst NGOs working on issues of Camisea is not new. Returning to De Weck and Cardich's monitoring reports from 1997 and 1998, they include the transcript of an interview with the leader of CECONAMA, Bernabe Choronto, who had been to both Washington and London to discuss the impacts of Camisea on the local population with Shell and with NGOs. He explains,

"Nos han preguntado sobre informes que han enviado otras instituciones que trabajan en la zona. Es una preocupación para ellos la situación de los nativos...Las ONGs querian conversar en ese momento sólo con nosotros...Nos han preguntado si la Shell está impactando el ambiente, están perjudicando, destruyendo los árboles, están

³⁴ This is not inconceivable: in an interview undertaken by De Weck and Cardich (1998a) the head of Nuevo Mundo (a CECONAMA-affiliated community) commiserated with the head of the Comunidad Nativa Camisea, where the comuneros had decided they did not want gas extraction infrastructure built anywhere near their community. The perception was, amongst the community leaders, that the nearer the gas plant to the communities, the greater the rewards would be.

³⁵ www.camisea.com.pe accessed 20 June 2005.

contaminando el agua y otras varias cosas. Nosotros hemos respondido que por ahora la Shell está trabajando bien y tenemos coordinación con ellos tanto en talleres y que hay consultas con las comunidades.” (De Weck and Cardich 1998a: 37)

They asked us about reports that had been sent by other institutions that work in the area. They are worried about the situation for indigenous people in the area...At the moment, the NGOs only want to talk with us...They asked us if [the work of] Shell is having an impact on the environment, if they are creating damage, destroying the trees, polluting the water and various other things. We replied that for the moment, Shell is working well, that we are coordinating with them in workshops, and that consultations are taking place in the communities.

He goes on to describe how in London a group of NGOs had heard the testimony of a Nigerian from Ogoniland, who had visited the Camisea region. She noted that;

”Ese nigeriano de regreso había informado mal. Dicen que Shell está trabajando mal, dicen que está contaminando el agua y que los peces se están muriendo, que la gente de la zona se está muriendo. Nosotros nos decimos por qué informa sin conocimiento” (De Weck and Cardich 1998a: 38).

That Nigerian did not report back accurately. They say that Shell is working badly, that they are polluting the water, that the fish are dying and that the people in the region are dying. We ask ourselves why he is reporting when he has no knowledge [of the area].

At this meeting an NGO representative had tried to persuade the indigenous leaders present to reject Shell outright, as it would destroy their communities and renege on its promises. The indigenous leaders’ response to this highlighted their pragmatic view on the situation in Camisea, where the government had already signed an agreement with Shell, and also the extremely high standards of environmental and social protection taken by the company at the time, which are still held up as a model of good conduct.

¿Por qué vamos a rechazar?, Shell ya ha firmado el Convenio con el Gobierno Peruano... hemos respondido que Shell siga trabajando pero en coordinación con nosotros de tal forma que queremos tener un Convenio directamente con la comunidad, con las Federaciones (Ibid: 39).

Why should we reject them? Shell has already signed an agreement with the Peruvian Government...we have replied that Shell should carry on working, but in coordination with us. That is why we want to have an agreement directly with the community, with the [indigenous] federations.

The reports of the meetings by Choronto are corroborated in a separate interview with the leader of COMARU at the time, who was also present.

“En la visita de Washington hemos visto que las ONGs internacionales se sienten muy preocupados por las experiencias que la empresa Shell ha pasado en otros lugares del mundo como Nigeria o Ecuador donde ha habido matanzas, crímenes por parte de la empresa petrolera” (Ibid: 13).

In the visit to Washington we saw that the international NGOs are very worried by experiences with Shell in other parts of the world, like Nigeria or Ecuador, where there were killings and crimes carried out by the oil company.

He was asked if any deaths had been caused by the presence of Shell, to which he had had to reply that no, that this was not the case: 'Entonces yo tuve que decir la verdad que eso no era lo real'. Both leaders refer to a document presented to the NGOs, allegedly by AIDSESEP, which contained incorrect information. This led them to declare that they, as indigenous leaders living in the area, were the only ones to really understand the situation. As such they should be the ones giving testimony.

Allegations of exaggeration by INGOs during the period when Shell was undertaking exploratory work in the region was backed up by discussions during the fieldwork with an anthropologist who at the time had been working with CAAAP (Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica – Amazonian Centre for Applied Anthropology and Practice) in the region. She too had been present at the meeting in Washington where some of the more 'ecological' NGOs were using a far more radical discourse than the local level actors in Peru.³⁶ She believed that the situation in the Camisea area, difficult to grasp in short field visits, is still being exaggerated by NGOs in the US.

In sum, there is a considerable disconnect between what is happening on the ground and the statements of those who declare themselves to be working with COMARU. A large number of Peruvian and international NGOs could claim to have worked with COMARU, through the involvement, at one stage or another, with the various 'interest groups' and 'civil society' groups that coalesced around the Camisea project. However, the agendas and activities of those involved in the groups are rarely communicated to COMARU or the communities. Nor is it clear that COMARU or its members have had adequate channels through which to put their views to the groups involved in lobbying. This was noted in a letter from CEDIA to a group of US organisations and also in a statement from the 'Alianza Amazónica de Líderes Indígenas' (Amazon Alliance of Indigenous Leaders) who declared that CI, WWF and TNC in their lobbying for a 'conservation fund' from the IDB for the Camisea area, 'no han consultado adecuadamente con los pueblos indígenas' – have not consulted adequately with the indigenous people – and are without any legitimacy to do such lobbying work on behalf of the populations in the area.

Further research with organisations involved in lobbying in DC during the fieldwork in July 2006 revealed the extent to which the motivation behind their involvement in Camisea differs from that of COMARU. Most notable was the similar language used by three of the six organisations in Washington to describe their interest in Camisea. Of particular interest is the use of the word 'emblematic' to describe the gas extraction project, and this word is key to understanding how they view the project. Involvement in lobbying on Camisea is seen as a way of getting wider leverage over the multilateral investment banks, in terms of influencing how they invest in the Amazon, particularly in large-scale extractive industries. This is generally because of environmental concerns. According to a representative from AmazonWatch, 'Camisea is bigger than Camisea'. She explained that Camisea can be used as a lever to press for change within the multilateral development banks. By putting it up as a model of what can go wrong in the Amazon, the organisation aims to halt further investment by public financing institutions in energy projects that they believe will be damaging to the region.

"For us Camisea is an emblematic project. It's not the only bad project in the Amazon, but for us we must really limit and focus our resources in areas where we can create the most change. And I think Camisea really provided that with its links to the international financing institutions. With the IDB, what Camisea has really done, is that it has really shaken up the institution. [...] This project has been responsible for really opening the doors. [...] It has started a process where they have to be more transparent and more accountable because of all the pressure, publicity and conflict that we, civil society, have created. There are a

³⁶ Interview with SNV staff member, 22nd August 2005, Cusco.

couple of things that have been in put in place: a serious review of the environmental policy at the bank, the new indigenous peoples' policy. [...] For us, Camisea is bigger than Camisea. It's more about creating residual change in the institutions that are financing [these types of project]." AmazonWatch Washington

Similarly for Environmental Defense, which only has a small budget for international work, focusing on Camisea was seen to give most 'bang for the buck' in terms of creating a 'ripple effect' with the export credit agencies and multilateral banks.

"As well as being a critical project in itself, strategically, both in terms of attempting to force some lasting changes in Peru and in terms of forcing some change in longer-term trajectory at the IDB and in Latin America more generally, it's the best thing going in terms of a recent project, so I think it continues to deserve attention." Environmental Defense Washington

For Oxfam, lobbying on Camisea is a way to effect change in the way that public financiers operate when funding private corporations, although Oxfam's approach is more geared towards indigenous rights.

"We are pushing for free, prior and informed consent with companies and banks. A lot of extractive industry work comes under Right to a Voice within Oxfam. We often choose to work where there is public finance for private sector projects. Camisea is important because it is emblematic of the risks involved in IDB financing for high-profile infrastructure or energy investments. And we are looking at Camisea as the tip of the iceberg in terms of the IDB. The new IDB president has expressly said that it needs to get more into private sector investment. They've raised the ceiling for single projects from 100 million to 400 million dollars, and so we expect a much bigger flow of money from the IDB to private sector projects." Oxfam America Washington

For Conservation International Camisea was the first time that the organisation had concentrated its lobbying work on 'changes in the funding sector' for extractive activity, rather than direct lobbying of private companies undertaking the actual extraction work. The organisation's stated goal is to improve the environmental practices of the corporate sector that will have most impact on the future of biodiversity.

Whilst attempts to change the way that export credit agencies and public financiers operate when dealing with extractive industry in sensitive areas is a worthwhile cause, it is far from the top priority of those affected by gas extraction on the ground. The problems COMARU faces relate to the specific energy companies located in the Urubamba, and the failure of the Peruvian government to oversee or sanction them satisfactorily. Putting pressure on the financiers of just one part of the project appears to be a very remote way of securing environmental protection or the upholding of indigenous rights. Whilst COMARU leaders acknowledge that ultimately the lobbying work may benefit them, this is a long-term strategy, and the pressure has perhaps come a little too late, considering the problems that the Machiguenga are already facing.

It is not the authors' intention to argue that all motivations behind lobbying on Camisea must be the same and necessarily geared towards the protection of indigenous rights. However, those organisations that specifically state that they work in 'partnership' with COMARU should acknowledge the limits to their shared agenda. To reiterate, working on issues surrounding gas extraction in the Camisea area is not equivalent to supporting the indigenous federations in the area. It would seem advisable, in order to quell rumours that INGOs are using the names of indigenous peoples for their own agendas, that international organisations make clear to those at

the grassroots exactly what they are trying to achieve through their lobbying work, and the extent to which this can be compatible with the goals of indigenous groups.

One important question that actors seem reluctant to pose is what, precisely, lobbying work in Washington has achieved. A common criticism amongst indigenous people before the IDB agreed the loan in 2004, was that by working over a number of years on loan conditions, the larger conservation organisations 'greenwashed' the project. This perception was endorsed by an observer in Washington, who noted that several of the large conservation organisations began working with the IDB long before it was known whether or not the bank would approve the loan. The IDB was as a result always able to claim that it was working on environmental issues because of its engagement with these organisations. Nevertheless, many of the loan conditions the INGOs worked for are not being met. The same group of lobbying organisations have been calling for independent monitoring of the conditions for some time, and are now also demanding an audit of the pipeline and of indirect social and environmental conditions. However, it is not clear what they plan to do with this information, if it is ever provided. COMARU needs the Peruvian government to take a firm hand with the energy companies that have not been abiding by environmental laws and have flouted environmental and social codes of practice. It is clear that the energies of the most powerful international NGOs have not been directed at these particular issues.³⁷ Ultimately, there may be some common ground to be found between environmental organisations and indigenous groups in forcing change in the ways that large-scale energy investments are made in sensitive areas, but this type of work does not respond to the immediate difficulties of COMARU, and others similarly affected across the Amazon.

AmazonWatch, Oxfam America and now WWF do support COMARU to varying degrees, mainly for training workshops and to cover running costs, but in their lobbying work they are using the situation of what is happening in the Urubamba as ammunition for a different type of battle. And despite declarations by international conservation NGOs that the Camisea area is of the utmost importance due to its fragile ecosystems and high, endemic biodiversity³⁸, there has been little direct technical or financial support from these or other Peruvian environmental NGOs for either the communities affected or their representative organisations. With a focus first of all on lobbying to try to prevent loans being granted to the consortium from banks in the US and then on achieving a series of conditions attached to the IDB loan, what is really happening at the grassroots appears to have been overlooked. As one commentator remarked, huge amounts of money have been spent on holding meetings in expensive hotels in Lima and Washington, but no organisation has ensured that a lawyer could be found to be present during all company negotiations at community level. Further, although concerted efforts have been made on the part of international NGOs to establish a more independent monitoring system that could be used by the indigenous groups to put pressure on the energy companies, this has yet to have been established.

This leaves the Machiguenga communities extremely vulnerable, particularly in the face of intimidating, bullying and illegal practices carried out by TGP. The huge power imbalances between the companies and the indigenous organisations also has serious implications for environmental standards. The support of the Peruvian government for the exploitation of the gas fields means that, in the eyes of some observers, the companies can behave with impunity: in August 2005 TGP had outstanding fines for lax environmental standards, and the sanction

³⁷ In their defence, it appears that the Peruvian government was not receptive to attempts by these organisations to dialogue over the Camisea issue when it first arose, and the IDB was selected as a target for lobbying activities. However, personnel and attitudinal changes within the relevant ministries may have occurred in the intervening years and could have created the political opportunities necessary for improved dialogue.

³⁸ See, for example, the website of Conservation International www.conservation-international.org

against the company for a pipeline rupture of the previous December had yet to be decided. Since then, there have been three more ruptures in the Lower Urubamba area (four in the pipeline in total). Were the indigenous organisations in the area properly funded, provided legal support and able to rely on an independent monitoring of the consortium's work, it might be more difficult for the companies to act outside the law.

The implications of a lack of support for COMARU: A case study of the public hearings

In early 1998, the leader of COMARU at the time stated in an interview:

"Todo el mundo habla de desarrollo sostenible, todos hablan de negociación, pero ninguna comunidad está preparada para negociar, no saben lo que significa un desarrollo sostenible". (De Weck and Cardich 1998a: 13)

The whole world talks about sustainable development, they all talk about negotiations, but none of the communities are prepared for negotiations. They do not know what sustainable development means.

Seven years later, the current head of COMARU voiced similar concerns as to the ability of the communities to negotiate with the companies for adequate compensation, and to use this money to the best advantage of the *comuneros*. The vulnerability of the Machiguenga and of their environment in the face of pressures from the government and from energy companies is illustrated by the following case study of the public hearings for Block 56. The episode also highlights the problems COMARU has as it struggles to act as a social movement organisation, and the extent to which NGOs have been discredited in the Machiguenga communities.

Extraction of gas from Block 88 has been on-stream since August 2004, and the next to follow in the region is Block 56. Awarded to the same consortium, the concession is adjacent to Block 88 to the northwest, and again impacts upon Machiguenga communities in the Lower Urubamba. The first stage of the development of each concession must produce an Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA, which must then be discussed at public hearings at the community, regional and provincial level. Problems began with the EIA for Block 56 when it was presented in the Machiguenga community of Shivankoreni. By law, there should be 90 days allowed for consideration of the documents (the EIA ran to nine volumes), and the submission of queries or criticisms (which must be presented in writing before the public hearing). The date of the public hearing, set by the companies for December gave less than the required period for consultation of the documents. The hearing was postponed, on the demand of the communities, and set for a date in January 2005. However, on 22 December 2004, the pipeline carrying liquid gas ruptured, leading to a spill that contaminated soil and a stream which feeds into the Urubamba.

According to reports from COMARU, TGP, responsible for the pipeline, at first denied that there was a problem. However, monitors and others reported seeing dead fish floating down the Urubamba, and a strong smell of gas. Community monitors themselves found the source of the spill, and took a sample of contaminated water to be sent for analysis.

At this stage COMARU and CECONAMA decided, after consultation with their members, that no representatives would attend the public hearing scheduled for 20 January, and presented a list of demands that was sent to the Ministry of Energy and Mines. They declared that they would not allow the public hearing to take place until the demands were met. These were known as the 'ocho puntos' or 'eight points'. They demanded:

1. That the causes of the spill be clarified
2. An inspection of the whole route of the gas pipeline
3. Independent environmental auditing of all the activities associated with Block 88 and the pipeline
4. Repair of damage caused to affected communities
5. Sanctioning of the entities responsible

6. Indemnification for affected communities
7. The reestablishment of lines of communication between the Camisea Consortium and the communities so that the latter are kept informed of all activities undertaken during the life of the project
8. Full guarantee that there will be no further spills or damage over the next 30 years of the project.

At this stage the indigenous organisations were in a very strong position, since plans for the development of Block 56 could not move forward until the EIA had been approved. Further, were its approval to be delayed past a certain point, it would automatically be declared void and would have to be rewritten.

With no response from the Ministry of Energy and Mines to the eight demands made by the organisations, the decision was made not to attend the public hearing. Representatives from the companies and the ministries involved arrived on the day in question at Shivankoreni to hold the meeting, but were interrupted by the deputy leader of COMARU who attempted to submit a statement to the representative from the Ministry of Energy and Mines that explained why the indigenous groups were boycotting the hearing. This was accompanied by a noisy demonstration of Machiguenga, dressed in traditional clothes, banging on empty oil drums and shouting 'Pagoreni no se vende, Machiguengas lo defiende' – [the gas field] Pagoreni won't be sold, the Machiguenga will defend it. COMARU's chief and other Machiguenga leaders then addressed the assembled group of officials, to explain their opposition to the hearing and again demand the fulfilment of the 'ocho puntos'.

Months later, however, the Machiguenga still did not feel that their wishes had been respected. It was decided by COMARU members, after a workshop in Quillabamba on 5 April, that they would again boycott the public hearing, which had been rescheduled for May. This decision was then ratified by the Comité de Gestión del Bajo Urubamba, which meant that it had support from the other indigenous federations and the local municipality. On 8 May, when the delegation from the government ministries and energy companies returned to Shivankoreni, they found the settlement completely deserted. The *comuneros* had organised a day of labour in the community's *chacra* or communal plot several kilometres away from the main settlement. No members of affected communities in the Lower Urubamba were present.

The second hearing, where the Machiguenga avoided confrontation by physically removing themselves from the site of the meeting, fits with the ethnographic texts elaborated by anthropologists of the Machiguenga from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both Rosengren and Johnson, discussed above, refer frequently to their non-confrontational attitude. Organising a noisy protest and a public rejection of the government and the energy companies was without doubt a novelty. A British anthropologist and NGO worker who was present in the community at the time of both failed hearings and who created a video documentary of the events that unfolded, remarked that the Machiguenga were elated by what they perceived as their triumph over the companies and the government. However, the companies were already trying to set another date for the hearing and were busy negotiating with the heads of COMARU and CECONAMA.

The leaders of COMARU and CECONAMA were invited to the company headquarters in the Urubamba, near the Las Malvinas settlement, for a meeting. During this meeting, both men decided to accept the public hearing. It is not known how they were persuaded to change their minds at such short notice after four months of defiant behaviour. COMARU's leader then travelled to Shivankoreni, where he called a meeting of the *comuneros*, who were still celebrating what they perceived to be their victory. In this meeting, he argued that,

- a) COMARU and the communities were being manipulated by foreign NGOs (a reference to the presence of the British anthropologist).

- b) By not cooperating with the companies, the communities risked forfeiting compensation since a law forcing compliance, known as the 'ley de servidumbre', could be imposed.
- c) NGOs had failed to provide any support for COMARU and the communities, and that the only way to ensure development was to get resources from the company.

With the eventual and grudging support from another member of the COMARU executive committee who expressed his concern that 'peor es nada' – it would be worse to get nothing at all – the leader was able to convince influential members of Shivankoreni to accept the hearing. As a consequence, the public hearing was eventually held on 10 May 10, although some communities refused to participate. Much of the blame for what happened was passed, by COMARU's leader, onto the anthropologist, her organisation Shinai Serjali, and onto AmazonWatch, with accusations that they were imposing their agenda on the Machiguenga communities and were jeopardising their levels of compensation and development. Considering the unease with which many community members view NGOs, it is possible that the leader was tapping into an underlying current of suspicion.

Negotiation of compensation is not supposed to commence until the EIA has been approved at all levels. It had also been COMARU's plan to negotiate as a group, to ensure the highest possible payouts for communities. After the fiasco of the hearings, in which many *comuneros* felt that they had been betrayed by their own organisation, it seems that communities decided to 'go it alone' in negotiations as soon as possible to ensure compensation. It appears they had lost trust in their supposedly representative organisation, whose chief had gone against decisions made collectively by communities and confirmed by the general assembly. Shivankoreni was able to count on the support of CEDIA (with which it has close links) in its negotiations. But the amounts awarded vary considerably between communities affected and are not thought to realistically represent the social and environmental impacts that are to follow. The unilateral behaviour on the part of the leader led, eventually, to his removal from office in an emergency session of the executive committee. He was replaced by the deputy leader.

In the weeks after the public hearing, the former leader (in self-justification) and the companies spread claims that COMARU had been manipulated by NGOs pushing their own agendas, and that the *comuneros* had wanted the public hearing to go ahead. However, this argument was countered by observations made during the fieldwork visit to the Lower Urubamba, where in public meetings called in three communities, *comuneros* voiced their surprise and anger that the hearing had gone ahead after the collective decision not to attend had been made. At the same time, there was considerable venom reserved for NGOs, who were perceived to have meddled in the affair. This was believed by the new leader to be both a result of a campaign by the gas companies and his predecessor to discredit NGOs as well as a general frustration with the lack of promised investment (by NGOs and the local government alike) in infrastructure in the area.

During the fieldwork visit in which the co-researcher accompanied the new leader on a scheduled visit, in five of the six villages his presence and discourse had a mollifying affect on *comuneros*. But in Shivankoreni the relationship had deteriorated to the extent that the chief of the village refused to hold a meeting. Whilst he found a number of excuses for this, the general attitude amongst influential members of the community seemed to be that Shivankoreni, having negotiated several hundred thousand dollars from the companies, no longer needed or wished for a close relationship with COMARU. A member of CEDIA gave his interpretation of the situation in Shivankoreni in an interview. He believed that there were a number of additional personal and political reasons for the breakdown in trust between the community and COMARU, but that the campaign by the energy companies and by the deposed leader to lay the blame for the situation with NGOs had hit home. Arguing that COMARU was controlled by foreign NGOs meant that COMARU and its leaders had come to be perceived as external actors and outsiders. We would argue that the executive decision to work with the companies had broken the united front of

opposition to the hearings and had left the communities without support they could trust at a crucial time of negotiations. Anxious to secure compensation for the community and paid employment for *comuneros*, influential members of Shivankoreni appear to have opted to distance themselves from COMARU and NGOs. This attitude may have been precipitated by suggestions from representatives from the Ministry of Energy and Mines that, having signed a letter opposing the holding of the public hearings, the head of Shivankoreni had potentially jeopardised benefits that might accrue to his community. The chief later denied that he had been involved in the drafting of the letter and claimed that it was the sole initiative of the British anthropologist/NGO worker from Shinai Serjali who was present in the community at the time. She vigorously denies this accusation. Other observers suggest that her organisation had, however, pushed a more radical stance in opposition to the proposed gas extraction in Block 56 than community members were happy to support. Neither the organisation nor the community's leaders were prepared for such a vigorous backlash from the companies. Blaming the NGO became, perhaps, the easiest option for influential members of Shivankoreni.

The accusations and confusion sown in the wake of the public hearings for Block 56 are illustrative of the massive power imbalances amongst the different actors in the Lower Urubamba. Crucially, in the run up to the public hearings, the company was able to get the indigenous leaders to their headquarters in Las Malvinas quickly, by helicopter, and then get them back to the communities where they were required to call meetings. Similarly, in the days after the public hearing, company representatives were able to visit each community in turn, to put across their version of what had happened in the space of an afternoon. COMARU, however, must rely on much slower river travel, which is often hampered by weather conditions and the bad state of repair of its boat and outboard motors. But most of all, COMARU is hindered by a lack of resources. A visit to the Lower Urubamba from the headquarters in Quillabamba costs a minimum of \$1500. The organisation simply did not have the funds to visit communities to explain what had happened over the public hearing.

The case study of the public hearing for Block 56 shows how COMARU lost its powerful position in its opposition to the gas companies. Given the Peruvian Government's seemingly unquestioning support for the extraction of Camisea gas and the massive power and resource imbalance between international energy companies and the grassroots indigenous federation, it is perhaps inevitable that this would have happened. However, some more militant observers in Peru point to the success of an Achuar group in the north of the country who have successfully resisted oil extraction on their land by a variety of different companies for a decade. Counterfactual musings aside, the nature of COMARU's defeat was extremely damaging both for the organisation, and for community members themselves. We would argue that much more support could have been provided by the non-governmental organisations, national and international, that have an interest in the Urubamba region. COMARU does have severe internal difficulties of leadership, administration and task management, and this appears to be one of the main reasons why funds channelled to the organisation have been limited. It is clear that financial resources alone will not automatically ensure that COMARU develops as a stronger local actor. However, at the time of the public hearings higher levels of funding would have enabled COMARU to behave in certain ways that would have strengthened its hand as a protest movement. COMARU did not have the resources to provide regular support, contact and information to its member communities at a time when they were under considerable pressure from government and company representatives to drop their resistance to the hearings. This issue of knowledge and up-to-date information was key at this time, since it appears that company representatives were able to spread misinformation surrounding the public hearings process. Similarly, communities did not have access to impartial legal advice that would have clarified their rights vis-à-vis the negotiation and compensation processes and as a result might have given them the necessary security and confidence to continue with their path of resistance.

Despite its eventual defeat, the challenges of the rupture of the gas pipeline and the holding of the public hearings created a situation in which COMARU began to behave much more like a social movement organisation, in that it saw an opportunity to gain leverage over powerful actors operating at the macro-level and mobilised its bases for collective action. The potential threats were significant enough for the Machiguenga to confront the authorities and to protest. During the months leading up to the public hearing in May, COMARU's leaders attempted to maintain a sustained challenge to powerholders and repeatedly voice their members' objections to the activities of the gas companies on their territory. This was achieved through displays and declarations of their unity, commitment and numbers. And yet they were eventually defeated, in the face of extreme pressure, by the energy companies who were able to use their power and financial superiority to wear down this resistance through a mixture of threats and coercion. COMARU was not able to counter the presence of the companies, largely because of a lack of funds. Somewhat paradoxically, had COMARU been in receipt of funding from NGOs, it might have been able to maintain its position and hold out until a settlement acceptable to all communities involved had been reached, that genuinely reflected environmental damage and losses to livelihoods.

While COMARU has shown itself able to reject overly conservation-oriented agendas, and the projects of external agents which potentially marginalise the centrality of indigenous organisations, it could perhaps develop as a stronger social movement with greater levels of funding for communications and legal support. Perhaps then, greater collaboration with NGOs that is geared more towards indigenous rights than conservation could strengthen social movement activity, rather than weaken it. A stronger indigenous movement in the Lower Urubamba would also serve the interests of conservation NGOs, as greater local resistance to environmental damage and company malpractice might lead to higher levels of adherence to codes of conduct. However, it is clear that Machiguenga communities are suspicious of too close a relationship between their representative organisation and external agents, and these suspicions are found throughout Peru at the local level as well as with the national level body, AIDSEP. The difficult balancing act that this type of relationship would require is perhaps reflected in the decision by the great majority of NGOs concerned with Camisea, not to provide financial and technical support to COMARU.

Despite the defeat in May 2005 over the issue of the public hearings, COMARU leaders have continued to encourage member communities along the path of resistance. Observation during the fieldwork to the Lower Urubamba highlighted a number of occasions during which the new leader suggested to *comunidades nativas* that they find their own ways to respond to incursions by loggers on their territories, and attempts by the companies to manipulate them. He gave examples of a couple of communities that had used innovative tactics to get greater concessions out of the gas companies and remove colonists from their lands. In November 2005, after a second gas spill on Machiguenga territory, the three indigenous organisations worked together for the first time, blockading the Urubamba river for two weeks to prevent supplies reaching the camps at Las Malvinas. (This disruptive action echoed that of an indigenous group further downstream who carried out a similar blockade in order to demand a percentage of gas royalties.) Whilst the blockade was resolved by promises of financial compensation and projects to create alternative food and drinking water provision for a number of Machiguenga communities, their increasingly radical protests suggest that COMARU will continue to adopt social movement-style tactics in its effort to voice the demands of its members.

Summary of findings and conclusion

This research project aimed to generate greater understanding of how the priorities of international and local actors influence each other and impact upon organisational agendas. These issues were examined in the light of arguments in social movement theory that claim that support for local level activism from external actors will lead to the cooptation of grassroots movements. In order to assess this type of relationship, the study sought to trace the historical development of one indigenous group's demands and discourse as it became involved with international actors, and to examine the sites of potential conflict with external organisations, in particular over issues of indigenous rights and biodiversity. From this juncture, it was planned that the study would analyse attempts to find common ground and ask whether collaboration impacts upon movement mission, membership, activities and self-presentation. The project also developed an action research component, in that it sought to understand why the indigenous group had problems establishing beneficial working relationships with external actors.

While COMARU still suffers from internal weaknesses, in particular over communications with its bases and training of leadership, the organisation has made considerable progress since its founding in the late 1980s and is the most active and representative of indigenous organisations in the Urubamba region. As external pressures on Machiguenga communities mount up, so COMARU has developed into an increasingly protest-focused organisation. This is a considerable achievement considering the historic lack of the most basic community level association amongst the Machiguenga and their 'conflict-avoidance', as noted by anthropologists working in the region in the 1970s and 80s. Even now, *comuneros* are more likely to identify themselves with their *comunidad nativa*, rather than as a member of a broader ethnic group. The leaders of the organisation are aware that there is still much work to be done to raise awareness amongst members of affiliated communities of indigenous rights, particularly with regards to resource extraction, but also of more practical questions such as how they will manage the changes to their livelihoods and lifestyles which will inevitably occur.

Whilst these problems are recurrent at the grassroots level, current and recent leaders of COMARU have a strong grasp of the language of indigenous rights and the discourse surrounding conservation and biodiversity. They show significant ability to alter the way they present the organisation and its aims, according to the audience they are addressing. This can be seen in press releases, open letters and meetings with an external and/or international attendance, where COMARU leaders 'frame' the indigenous group as natural guardians of the forest and its flora and fauna, whilst also stressing their rights to this land and the management of its biodiversity. In internal meetings, the language used differs, and leaders seem to avoid references to biodiversity and conservation, choosing instead to speak of natural resource management and sustainable resource use.³⁹

It could be argued that the avoidance of these terms suggests COMARU leaders are trying to disassociate themselves from the discourse of conservationists when speaking to Machiguenga community members. It is clear that there is a great deal of mistrust in the *comunidades nativas* of NGOs, and this was clearly expressed by *comuneros* during the fieldwork visit to the Lower Urubamba. Community members spoke of the many meetings held over the years with NGO representatives, promises that were made to set up projects, and then a failure to return to

³⁹ Adapting discourse to fit the occasion can, however, backfire. The current leader of COMARU was criticised by one NGO representative for talking about 'SWOT' analysis and needs assessment. She considered this language 'unindigenous' and his attitude lacking in awareness of the Machiguenga 'cosmovision'. The organisation appears to be in a no-win situation, as it has been criticised by other NGOs for failing to complete accounting reports on time, and for having weak administrative capacity.

implement their proposals. At the time of the first fieldwork visit, CEDIA appeared to be the only NGO that had the confidence and support of Machiguenga communities, largely down to its long-term involvement in the region and the visible and practical outcomes of its work.

Wariness amongst Machiguenga communities of NGOs (or perhaps of outsiders more generally) is not a new phenomenon, as field notes from monitoring visits made to the region in the mid-1990s Shell era attest. At this time, *comuneros* expressed a concern that their leaders and organisation were unduly influenced by international actors, and the lure of overseas travel. This underlying fear of external cooptation continues, and was exploited by the deposed leader at the time of the public hearings for the environmental impact assessment of Block 56. He excused his behaviour (telling the energy companies that COMARU and its members would agree to hold the public hearing) by saying that the organisation was in the grip of external NGOs and their particular agendas, but that COMARU had never received significant material benefits from these organisations.

Machiguenga communities and COMARU have further reasons to be wary of the work of NGOs: their own experiences with Conservation International over the planning for Parque Nacional Otishi and the Machiguenga communal reserve, and reports from elsewhere in Peru of alleged violations of indigenous territory by WWF. Their wariness led to suspicion and mistrust when Oxfam attempted a biodiversity audit in a number of Machiguenga communities. At the time of writing, the current leader of COMARU was initiating a project with WWF, but doing so with extreme caution, lest conservation and biodiversity priorities overtake those of COMARU and its members.

It would appear that the Machiguenga and COMARU are concerned about how collaboration with external actors, particularly those involved in conservation, might affect the organisation's mission, and the leadership are aware that too close a liaison might damage relationships with their membership. In the eyes of some *comuneros*, COMARU was too closely involved with the NGO Shinai Serjali, and the ensuing debacle over the public hearings (in which Shinai Serjali were implicated, rightly or wrongly) did negatively affect the relationship between some Machiguenga communities and their representative organisation.

However, in the absence of a supportive State, COMARU cannot cut itself off from NGOs, as it would then be entirely dependent on the energy companies for funding. The leadership therefore have to maintain a careful balance of cooperation, whilst avoiding the imposition of external agendas on COMARU's priorities. The organisation's history shows a generally cautious approach to working with NGOs, as can be seen in their varying levels of involvement in community monitoring of the impacts of gas extraction that has been led by a couple of Peruvian NGOs and a reluctance, in the 1990s Shell era, to become involved in the 'indigenous commission'. However, this seems to be more about ensuring a central role for COMARU, rather than a rejection of specifically conservation-focused agendas.

In terms of gas extraction, COMARU has always taken a pragmatic approach to the project, and has never opposed Camisea outright. This creates difficulties for NGOs, who have a tendency to take a strong line on conservation and gas extraction. For COMARU, there is an obvious need for pragmatism: the project was probably unstoppable, considering the political commitment to it on the part of the Peruvian government, Machiguenga *comuneros* want paid employment, and COMARU is keen for its community members to benefit from 'development' in the form of health, education, electricity and drinking water. This means, however, that it is hard for COMARU to find common ground with organisations that reject any large-scale extractive activity in the Amazon. It also narrows possibilities of collaboration with organisations that give greater priority to biodiversity conservation than natural resource management.

As has already been noted, as the research progressed, it became clear that it would be difficult to examine the impacts of collaboration between COMARU and international organisations, as there are so few examples of this type of partnership, despite web-based claims to the contrary. The organisations that have managed to develop the deepest relationships with COMARU – Oxfam America and CEDIA – have a focus on indigenous rights and try, in the main, to work to support the priorities of the Machiguenga as expressed through their representative organisation. NGOs that have more of a hard-line anti-extraction or pro-conservation agenda will necessarily find it harder to find common ground with a federation that must respond to the wishes of its members. Further, organisations that support indigenous rights acknowledge that the work they do with local partners will almost inevitably be political and politicised in nature, and accept that there may be difficult consequences of this. Representatives of conservation organisations interviewed for this study expressed reluctance to work on issues considered ‘political’. This is problematic for COMARU: resource extraction in general is a political issue, because of the huge sums of money involved, and the interest of the State in the royalties it can accrue.

The sensitive nature of the Camisea project, and the politicisation of indigenous organisations are perhaps two reasons why there is such little involvement of conservation INGOs in the Urubamba region. It is nevertheless surprising, considering how important these actors believe the region to be in terms of biodiversity. The one area where international actors will get involved in Camisea is on lobbying at the highest levels in Washington DC. Extensive resources have been expended on this type of advocacy work, and it is here that some organisations will claim to be working productively with indigenous organisations. However, the priorities of international organisations lobbying the IDB to put conditions on its loans to the Camisea project are not necessarily the same as those affected by gas extraction at the grassroots. They appear more concerned with achieving long-term change in the way in which public financing institutions operate when investing in environmentally and socially sensitive areas, rather than more specific problems with the Camisea project itself. They may regard the imposition of environmental and social conditions on an IDB loan as a breakthrough, but given that the energy companies in Camisea are routinely flouting environmental and social codes of practice, this would appear to be a hollow victory.

In sum, these international organisations state, quite truthfully, that they are working on Camisea. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are working in partnership with COMARU on these issues. The leaders of the indigenous organisations remark that they are generally left unaware of what is happening in Washington DC and the NGOs involved are ‘using COMARU’s name for their own agendas’. We would conclude that whilst COMARU is able to resist the imposition of conservation and other external agendas from NGOs at the local level, it cannot avoid being co-opted at a distance, by international actors that wish to show that they have been given a mandate by the Machiguenga communities.

More optimistically, attitudes in the large conservation organisations towards indigenous groups do seem to be changing. Mac Chapin’s *Challenge to Conservationists* appears to have been highly influential in this regard, and his harsh criticisms do seem to have hit home. There have been considerable changes in WWF and some in CI on how they work with indigenous groups, and WWF’s work has been shifting for some time towards greater involvement with indigenous organisations, both at the national level, and with increased work with communities at the grassroots. It remains to be seen whether WWF’s relationship with COMARU will turn into a long-term fruitful partnership. It can only be hoped that greater levels of technical and financial support will help to build up COMARU’s presence as a protest movement and powerful local actor so that it can prevent further manipulation of isolated and vulnerable indigenous communities by international energy companies.

The restrictions placed on fieldwork by cultural factors amongst the indigenous group, recent events in the region that problematised visits by external actors, and the logistical difficulties of

travel to communities mean that there is limited data on which to generalise to theory on cooptation of social movements. However, the findings from the action research approach adopted do suggest that there is a need to rethink some of the assumptions underlying the supposed inevitability of cooptation. The arguments put forward by McAdam et al. (1988) and Piven and Clowen (1995) over the way that external actors that provide financial support for movements will have undue influence over movement activities and political orientation are posited as though movements will be completely unaware of this possibility. Cooptation is presented as creeping or insidious.

However, our research shows that both the leadership and membership are acutely aware of the way in which external actors can try to privilege their own agendas and coopt the leadership. Members will sanction a leader who is thought to be overly influenced by outsiders or who has put their own interests before that of the movement. The leadership, furthermore, craft a delicate balancing act between fundraising from external sources as a matter of organisational survival and trying to insure the protagonism and autonomy of the organisation. Movement leaders achieve this through a number of mechanisms, including the employment of different 'frames' that will suggest both distance from and association with the same agenda according to their audience. They also use regular references to agreements in international law that support the group's claims to autonomy and specific rights. However, these mechanisms are read by some external actors as radical and politicising and may have prevented the establishment of profitable relationships between the movement and external supporters. Finally, attempts by the movement to assert autonomy have not prevented cooptation from a distance, as external actors assert a close relationship with the organisation in order to lend support to their own particular agendas at the international level.

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Indigenous social movements and international NGOs in the Peruvian Amazon

Lucy Earle and Brian Pratt

This paper presents a detailed case study of an indigenous organisation based in the Peruvian Amazon and its relationships with international NGOs. The ethnic group that the organisation represents lives in an isolated region that harbours both high levels of biodiversity and significant reserves of natural gas. The study focuses on how the indigenous organisation attempts to represent the needs of its member communities in the face of threats to livelihood from the extractive activity of multinational energy companies on their territory; and also how it tries to negotiate support from conservation agencies and international NGOs to respond to these threats and its members' demands for greater levels of local development.

The report tracks the organisation's progress as it develops its strategic repertoire of protest and collective action, and the response of international NGOs to the increasingly politicised situation at the local level. Finally, it examines attempts at collaboration between the international and local levels, particularly in the areas of biodiversity conservation, protected areas and high-level advocacy campaigns.

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