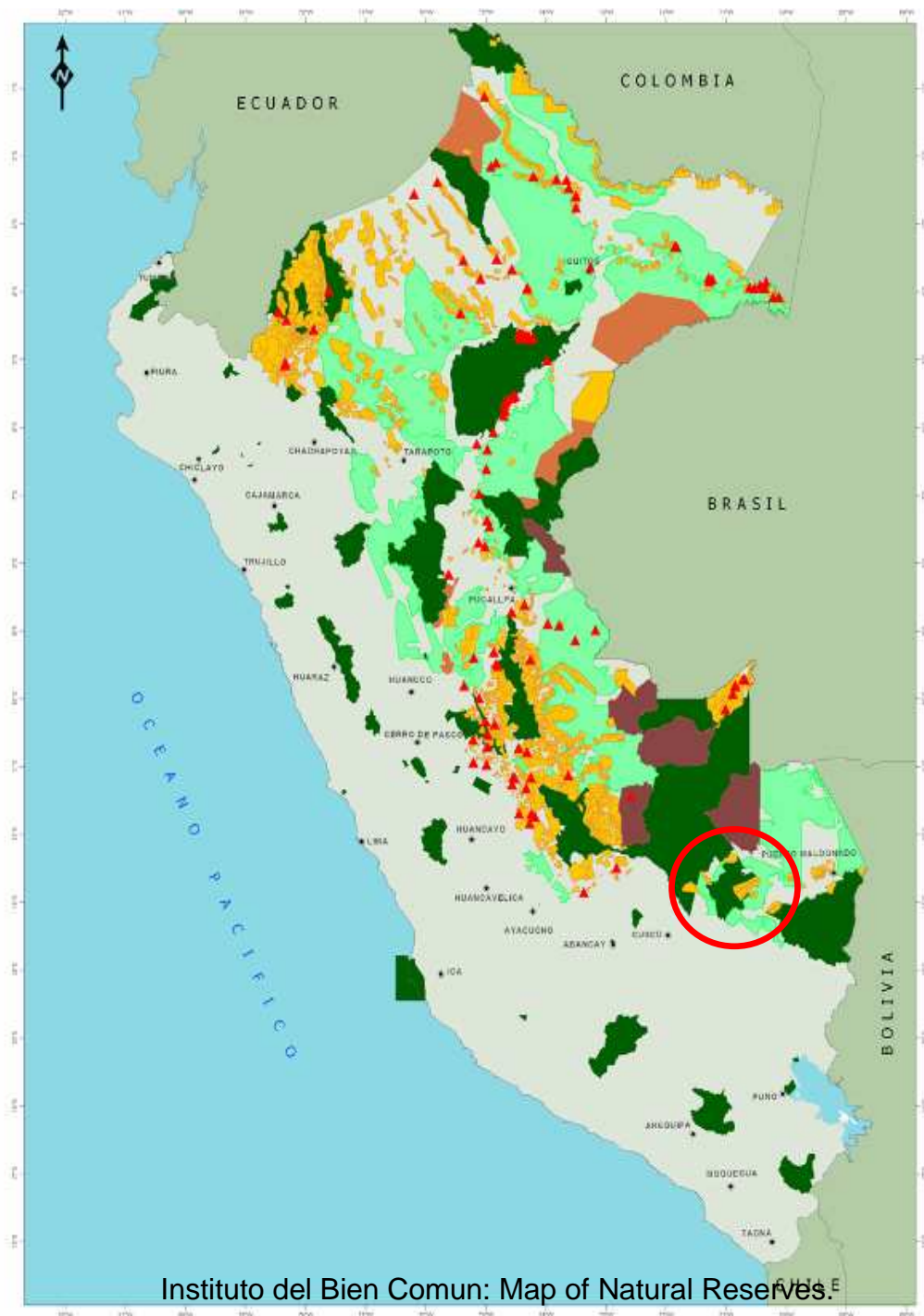


Amarakaeri: The Shaky Existence of a Communal Reserve

Presentation based on Oliart P. and V. Biffi: **Encuentros y desencuentros en los discursos sobre el futuro de la biodiversidad amazónica: territorialidad indígena, conservación y desarrollo para el progreso**. Lima, Instituto del Bien Común, 2007.

Photo: Claus Kjaerby



The Amarakaeri Communal Reserve (ACR) in Madre de Dios, was created in 2002 encompassing 402,335.62 Hectares of inhabited forest, neighbouring 10 communities (Harakmbut Yine and Matsiguenga) Pop. around 1700 people.

Range of altitude (200 to 4000 mts) brings together species from most areas in the rainforest.

The ACR is also surrounded by 23 migrant settlements with more than 8000 people.

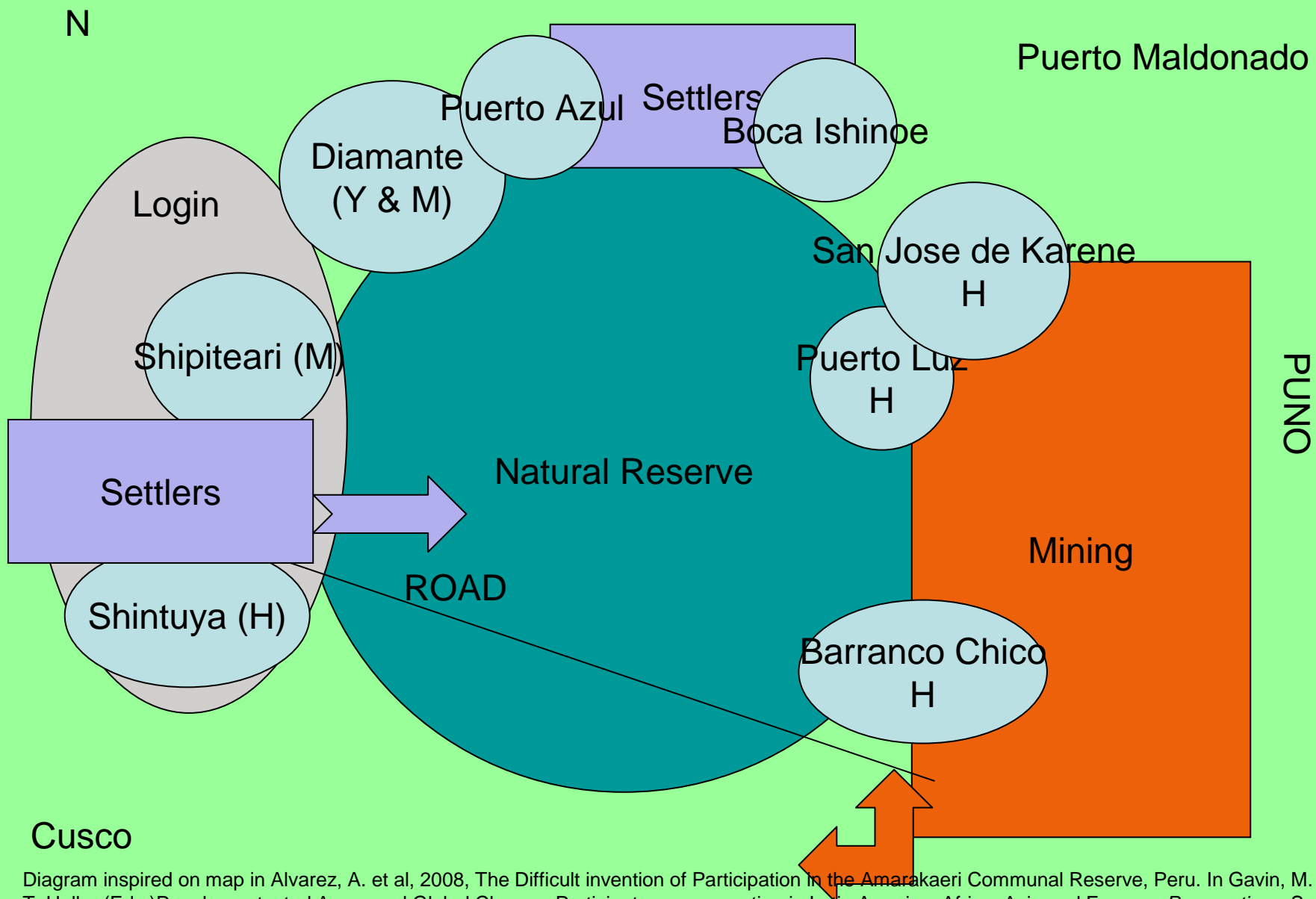


Diagram inspired on map in Alvarez, A. et al, 2008, The Difficult invention of Participation in the Amara Kaeri Communal Reserve, Peru. In Gavin, M. and T. Haller (Eds.) People, protected Areas and Global Change: Participatory conservation in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. *Perspectives*. Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North South, University of Bern, Vol. 3, Bern:Geographica bernensia, 560 pp.



Pristine zone used for hunting and fishing. Agriculture also depends on clean water.
FENAMAD worked for the creation of the reserve since 1996 due to several pressures:
Photo: Claus Kjaerby



1. Threats and increasing pressure over pristine areas posed by intensive logging prompted by the mahogany boom in 1980

Photo Park Watch



2. Gold mining increasing geometrically from the 1970s onwards...

Photo: Claus Kjaerby



3. And rumours of oil companies coming back to the area after disastrous experience with Cities Service in the 1970s



Photos: Claus Kjaerby



Photo: Claus Kjaerby



All these lead to the Paro Indígena in November 2001 against loggers, miners and increasing pressure on the rainforest. The reserve was created in April, 2002.

Photo: Claus Kjaerby



- The law establishes the ACR as a conservation unit co-managed by the state and COHARYMA, the association of Harakmbut, Yine and Matsiguenga communities. GEF granted US\$ 1 million to support the implementation of ACR management. A buffer zone was established.
- A few economic projects were supported by NGOs (collection of Brazilian nuts, crafts, and ecotourism). The main problem being that profitable use of the forest was rendered illegal.
- Environmental monitoring became a paid job for some members of the communities.

No extractive activities are allowed in the reserve. Only traditional use of resources and a few development projects.

Wanamei Expeditions, an eco/ethno tourism agency became one of those projects.

Unrealistically high expectations on profit, organisational difficulties, and criticism about the lack of evidence of benefits for different communities, rendered it as non-viable project for all communities.

But ideas from the project are still used by dwellers involved in tourism.



Expeditions through the reserve (closeness to the Manu Park allows them to offer a cheaper, more grassroots, alternative).

Photo: Jamil Alca



Demonstrations of traditional practices, and hosting visitors in the communities.

Photo: Claus Kjaerby

But nothing compares with the cash flow that logging and mining provide



Photo: Claus Kjaerby

Nuestros abuelos vivieron en el bosque, pero nuestros hijos no van a vivir allí.

Hay dos visiones diferentes: los ancestros y los jóvenes. Para los ancestros está claramente que esa reserva comunal es de ellos porque ellos han pasado muchas cosas ahí, tienen buenos recuerdos, donde ellos han tenido enfrentamientos, que han salido a la civilización mediante los dominicos, para ellos esa reserva es como su casa, son algo sagrado para ellos. Sienten respeto (Leader of FENAMAD)

A generational divide has on one side the elderly and the generation of leaders who had the creation of ACR as a political triumph, and on the other, young families trying to stretch the boundaries of the buffer zone in the reserve as much as possible.

En principio (los jóvenes) pensaban que la reserva era para ellos, pero ahorita los jóvenes, dicen “tenemos la reserva pero no tenemos ningún beneficio de la reserva. Por gusto reclaman la reserva”.

- No benefits are perceived from having a reserve they can't use, and an increasing rebellion defies the leaders' authority on a daily basis, with families engaging in mining and logging in growing areas of the reserve.
- The news that Hunt Oil has signed a 40 year contract to conduct exploration and oil exploitation in almost the total area of the reserve has only reinforced feelings of vulnerability among dwellers, making some even more resolute to engage in extractive activities.



Gold panning in Puquiri river.

Photo: Park Watch



Photo Park Watch



“si tú te encargas de alimentar a mis hijos, si tú te encargas de hacer estudiar a mis hijos, yo no trabajo”

Response given to a guard when he tried to stop men from mining in a river bank within the reserve.

Photos: Alex Alvarez





Photo Park Watch

Se ha hablado bastante, pero como te digo, ya no hay ese concepto que si te portas tú así, ya no cortas madera. Ya no ya, al contrario, te mandan a rodar, “Tú quien eres para que mandes así”. O sea ya no hay respeto prácticamente, porque hace poco nomás sacaron madera de la reserva. Entonces decomisamos la madera, “Tú quien eres para que decomises” Y a la semana siguiente del decomiso está desaparecida la madera. [A las autoridades] nos mandan a rodar.



Photo Park Watch

[Las personas que trabajan madera o minería de manera ilegal] sienten como que tú les estarías prohibiendo que hagan esas cosas, porque las necesidades son bastantes. Y lo que se está haciendo ahorita como organización es que las actividades se formalicen para que no estén trabajando ilegalmente. Esa es la única forma como nosotros estamos promoviendo porque no le puedes decir también que “no puedes trabajar”. En esa parte si estamos nosotros, que las actividades, que las formalicen legalmente para ellos... para que no tengan problemas. En esa parte estamos como organización.

- The environmentalist agenda was not behind the creation of the reserve. Conservationism as a global agenda is not embraced by the central state, the regional government, or even the NGOs working with indigenous organisations. Although accepted as lip service, it bears no real legitimacy as a discourse.
- The environmentalist rationale behind the law that allowed the creation of the reserve was brought into play to secure access for indigenous communities to a threatened pristine area, sought after by many for its unexploited resources.
- The unspoken problem is that in the midst of all the conflict and discussion, few acknowledge the integration to the market that society forces upon people who only a few decades ago had little or no contact with the West.
- The other unspoken fact by those defending the reserve is the demographic reality of a majority of a migrant population whose reasons for being there are the resources of the rain forest.



Photo: Claus Kjaerby

- FENAMAD has remained the most consistent actor in this ordeal, loyal to the protection of indigenous rights, and with only prudent allegiance to other agendas, usually with very practical purposes behind.
- The need for control over loggers and miners however is very urgent, not only for economic or environmental reasons, but also for cultural reasons.
- In this scenario, the presence of oil companies emerges as a potentially beneficial presence, mostly by a proven ability to pay guards who could prevent the intrusion of illegal loggers and miners in the area.

Y de qué manera podemos hacer el negocio con ellos (Hunt Oil)? No solamente es que las mismas comunidades vengan a decir “Oye sabes qué? Queremos trabajo”. “Ya, que entre nomás”. Entonces, si es que queremos hacer un buen negocio con ellos y que cumplan con todos los requisitos que dice la ley, lógicamente se puede hacer un buen trato.