

“It is loved and it is defended”: Critical Solidarity Across Race and Place

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Abstract: Since 2010, the Wixárika (Huichol) indigenous people of western Mexico have struggled against transnational mining activity in their sacred pilgrimage site of Wirikuta in the semi-desertic plateaus of San Luis Potosí. This struggle has been accompanied by a multitude of non-indigenous and largely urban actors who have joined the Wixárika, bringing with them their own cultural, political and geographic registers for understanding and mobilising against mining in the region. Taking Wirikuta as a contemporary demonstration of interracial and cross-geographic alliance building, I analyse how social movements that express solidarity and affective ties with the territories and cultures of indigenous peoples struggle to unsettle entrenched racial and spatial relations.

Resumen: A partir del 2010, el pueblo originario wixárika (huichol) del occidente mexicano, ha luchado contra actividades mineras en Wirikuta, sitio sagrado de peregrinación ubicado en el semi-desierto del altiplano de San Luis Potosí. A esta lucha se ha sumado una multitud de aliados principalmente no-indígenas y urbanos quienes han aportado sus propios registros culturales, políticos y geográficos para comprender y movilizar acciones en contra de la minería en esta región. Tomando Wirikuta como un ejemplo contemporáneo de alianzas interraciales y multi-situadas, analizo cómo los movimientos sociales que expresan solidaridad y lazos afectivos con los territorios y las culturas de los pueblos originarios, manifiestan arraigadas relaciones de alteridad racial y espacial.

Keywords: Indigenous peoples, affect, solidarity, social and environmental activism

Wirikuta no se vende, se ama y se defiende.

Wirikuta is not for sale, it is loved and it is defended.

(Protest chant for the movement to defend Wirikuta)

In July 2010, a series of phone calls were made and emails were sent between a small group of long-time advocates of Wixárika (Huichol)¹ indigenous territory and culture, whose ancestral homeland lays in Mexico’s Western Sierra Madre. We had been alerted to the concession of 15,632 acres of sacred land to the Canadian transnational mining company, First Majestic Silver Corporation, and would soon learn of a larger concession granted to Vancouver-based Revolution Resources. The targeted area, known as Wirikuta, is located nearly 500 km east of

Wixárika communal territory in the semi-desert plateaus of San Luis Potosí. By September, a coalition of non-governmental organisations and Wixárika authorities had formed under the banner of the Wirikuta Defense Front *Tamatsima Wa'haa* (The Waters of Our Elder Brothers). Wixárika elders, agrarian authorities, university students and urban professionals organised a parallel association, the Regional Wixárika Council, which sought to unify all Wixárika communities to mobilise against threats to their territories. The initial press releases and social media announcements galvanised an even wider network of supporters, including international indigenous rights advocates, lawyers, musicians, actors, journalists and documentarians. There were also many New Agers from Mexico and abroad who allied themselves to the call to protect the land of the sacred peyote from the immediate and long-term effects of mining.

The ensuing four years of mobilisations eventually led to the cancellation of the concessions owned by Revolution Resources and a moratorium on explorations from the other mining companies involved, including First Majestic Silver. The mobilisations also led to a series of fractures amongst the indigenous and non-indigenous activists and the *mestizo*² farmers living in the region who stood divided over the promises and perils of mineral extraction. As the controversy gained media attention in 2011, the number of people who allied themselves to the protection of Wirikuta multiplied, as did the events that sought to raise awareness and funds. These activities culminated in May 2012 with a one-day festival called the WirikutaFest where Latin America's most popular alternative rock groups played to a sold out crowd in Mexico City. The approximately US \$650,000 raised was partly slated to provide seed funds for small economic initiatives for the local inhabitants of Wirikuta (Consejo Regional Wixárika 2014). And while the event stood as a small victory against transnational mining and proof of the effectiveness of grassroots organising, the conflict over the allocation of funds exposed the tensions between the *mestizo* activists and the Wixaritari as they struggled over the future of the region's cultural and ecological landscape.

This text examines how the activism surrounding the protection of Wirikuta brings to light the web of interracial solidarity that is activated through a series of affective ties to indigenous culture and territory. As such, this is a story about the construction of affective ties to particular landscapes and spiritual aesthetics and it is a story of solidarity's possibilities and pitfalls. This work resonates with recent scholarship on the “interior life of politics” and the quotidian life of activism across forms of difference and scale (Arenas 2015; Clough 2012; Smith and Jenkins 2011). Nathan Clough notes how “the particular emotional-affective couplings that social movements create as an aspect of oppositional consciousness building and mobilization require as much attention as the organizational and tactical forms that movements build” (2012:1684). Accordingly, the defence of Wirikuta is illustrative of the articulations and disarticulations that shape, enable and disable social movements that carry within them complex relations of power. These dynamics bring to the surface quotidian racial and spatial tensions permeating Mexican society.

As a non-indigenous Mexican American woman, my involvement with the movement to protect Wirikuta came about through my family's close relationship with Wixárika people and territory and, by extension, our proximity to other

non-indigenous allies. In the 1970s, my father began decades of cultural and ecological advocacy in the Western Sierra Madre, and in 2001 I started my own research on contested development projects in the region. This was followed by work on the life experiences and urban activism of Wixárika university students in the cities of Guadalajara and Tepic. The mining concessions were announced during these final stages of research and one of my informants rose to become one of the principal leaders of the movement. The Oakland-based non-profit organisation I am a part of, the Wixárika Research Center, joined the international movement to support the Wixárika peoples' cultural and territorial defence, organising solidarity and fundraising activities. Over the past seven years I have conducted a multi-situated ethnography of the Wirikuta movement, analysing the challenges that social and environmental movements face as they work across racial and geographic boundaries. This research includes my own involvement in the coalition, participant observation, informal conversations, workshops with Wixárika college students, as well as ongoing formal interviews with the movement's key Wixárika and non-Wixárika activists.

The first section of this text situates Wirikuta's cultural and ecological significance followed by an overview of the politics of mineral extraction in contemporary Mexico. The second part focuses on the affective appeals that mobilise people from distinct backgrounds and geographic locations. I pay particular attention to the ways in which notions of indigeneity and Wirikuta's own fame as a "place of power" become productive forces behind the representation of the struggle itself. This dynamic provides greater visibility and popular appeal while also presenting the challenge that one Wixárika law student termed "a crisis of representation", wherein the coalition was critiqued for supplanting Wixárika leadership—itsself contested terrain. In the last decade, human geographers have turned their attention to the study of affect, emotions and solidarity (Arenas 2015; Barker and Pickerill 2012; Clough 2012; Pile 2009; Rice and Burke 2017). Many of these studies explore how affect and emotions shape social movements, relationships amongst activists and networks to particular places. Like Barker and Pickerill (2012), I am attentive to the ways in which alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples replicate colonial structures of power and bring to the surface a dissonance between distinct forms of spatial practices. In other words, I share an interest in examining how "conceptual divides are exacerbated by physical divides" (Barker and Pickerill 2012:1715) and may lead to "mutually produced dismissal" (Rice and Burke 2017:3).

My explorations of the connections between affect and solidarity are directed at analysing multiracial and multi-situated coalitions that form around a struggle that targets a particular geography and people. As such, my use of affect is a conceptual tool for understanding how an assortment of non-indigenous actors understand and activate their sense of urgency around mining activities that have immediate effects for local desert residents and ancestral Wixárika practices. Nonetheless, my research finds that while affect can ignite solidarity, it may not necessarily sustain it over time and space.

The final segment suggests critical solidarity as an activating concept that centres equity and self-reflection as a necessary step toward coalition building.

Alliances formed under the impetus of human and environmental rights may hold greater promise if they are able to be attentive to the ways in which historically sedimented understandings of race are reactivated (Pred 2004). Or, as Barker and Pickerill note with regard to anarchist-indigenous alliances in Canada: “It is often necessary to begin by pursuing deep understandings of place-based relationships, connections to governance and nationhood, as well as impacts of settler colonization on relational networks and implications for decolonization” (2012:1719). In other words, it is not enough to stand against new forms of colonialism if personal and collective efforts toward decolonisation are not a part of the mobilising process. Attending to these challenges can have, I argue, important implications on the broader push for social and environmental justice.

An Overview of the Wirikuta Natural and Cultural Reserve

Wirikuta should not be understood as a mere set of geographical points, but as an expression of the world vision of the Wixárika, of their customs and traditions. The pilgrimage to their sacred sites and the offerings that are deposited in these places are a fundamental part of the rituals that permit a renovation of life and form part of their right to traditional culture and territory (Frente para la Defensa de Wirikuta 2013:14).

Wirikuta is a Natural and Cultural Reserve that encompasses 345,948 acres in the Chihuahuan Desert, located in the north-central state of San Luis Potosí. This reserve holds the largest diversity of cactuses in the world, many of which are threatened, and many of which are endemic to the region, such as the case of the peyote (Frente para la Defensa de Wirikuta 2013:15). Wirikuta is also a nesting ground for the golden eagle, Mexico’s national bird that is prominently depicted devouring a snake on top of a cactus on the country’s flag. Environmental organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and Mexico’s National Commission for the Study and Use of Biodiversity have designated the Chihuahuan Desert³ as one of the three most bio-diverse deserts in the world. Within this semi-desert, the “ecoregion” that comprises Wirikuta is home to 70% of the 250 bird species and 60% of the mammals found in the Chihuahuan Desert (Negrín and Negrín 2011).

Beyond its distinctive flora and fauna, Wirikuta represents one of the five sacred pilgrimage sites for the Wixárika indigenous peoples whose communities span the Western Mexican states of Nayarit, Jalisco and Durango. According to archaeological and historical records, the Wixárika are one of several linguistically related ethnic groups that lived in *Hikuripa*, a region surrounded by peyote (*hikuri* in Wixárika) that includes central and northern Mexico (Gutiérrez Contreras 2001:52; Negrín 2003). Over the ensuing centuries the Wixaritari have continued to take yearly pilgrimages to *Tawewiécame*, known as “Our Father Sun” and “Our Creator”, whose “essence” is located in the eastern semi-desert of Wirikuta (Negrín and Negrín 2011). It is here where the Wixárika travel to seek out the sacramental peyote cactus that grows low to the earth and represents both a

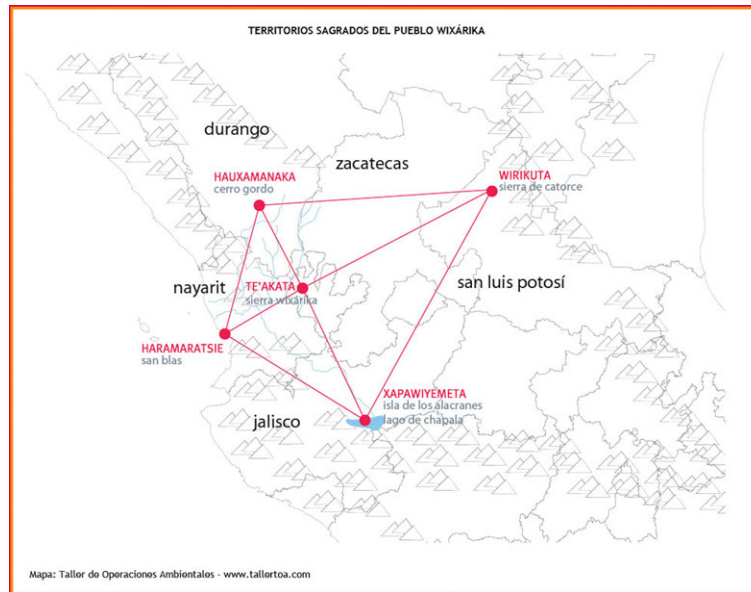


Figure 1: Wixárika sacred territory (shaped as a *tsikiri*) (map courtesy of Taller de Operaciones Ambientales, 2013; reproduced here with permission) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

flower and the footprint of the deer, considered their most sacred animal and “Our Elder Brother”.

The journey of over 300 miles from the sierra communities to Wirikuta represents the culmination of months of rituals that include vigils, deer hunts and sacrifices that seek to produce a spiritual balance, yielding better harvests through fulfilling the paths of the ancestors. It is important to note that the Wixárika peoples’ “holy trinity” is made up of the corn, the peyote and the deer, establishing an interdependence between the spiritual world linked to the paths walked by their ancestors, and the physical world centred around the agrarian calendar. The pilgrimages to Wirikuta that take place during the dry season (usually between the months of February and May) are also a fundamental rite of passage for Wixárika children and adults alike:

From the time they are children, the Wixárika hear chants about how they emerged from the embryonic womb of Our Mother (located to the West in the Pacific) in order to reach the East, beginning their journey as caterpillars and arriving to the East as butterflies to liberate themselves to Our Celestial Mother in the dawn where the sun ascends, in *Xeunari*, the Burnt Peak, at the eastern edge of Wirikuta (Negrín and Negrín 2011).

As many Wixárika authorities have reiterated over the past seven years of struggle, without Wirikuta and the sacramental peyote, Wixárika culture ceases to exist as it has since time immemorial.⁴

In light of the ecological and cultural value that Wirikuta holds for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, the Mexican government and international



Figure 2: Panoramic view of the sacred site known as Tamatsi Kauyumarie Muyewe or Bernalejo (photo courtesy of Plinio Hernández, 2016; reproduced here with permission) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

organisations have created several decrees for its protection since the late 1980s. In 1988, it was named part of UNESCO’s Global Network of Sacred Natural Sites and added to the list of tentative World Heritage Sites, in 1991 San Luis Potosí declared Wirikuta a Historical and Cultural Heritage Site and a Zone for Ecological Conservation and, in 1999, a Protected Natural Reserve and a Sacred Site for the Wixárika People. In 2008 President Felipe Calderón, accompanied by Wixárika authorities and the governors of San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Nayarit and Durango, signed the Pact of “Hauxa Manaká for the Preservation and Development of Wixárika Culture”. The document commits all signatories to “create protective mechanisms based on the conscience and good will of the interested parties for the preservation, respect and historical continuity of sacred sites and the development of Wixárika culture” (Pacto Hauxa Manaká 2008:2).

While the “development of Wixárika culture” proclaimed by former President Calderón remained an abstract principle, the Pact of Hauxa Manaká was in large part a product of years of efforts by Wixárika authorities, non-governmental agencies and academics to establish a Management Plan for the Natural and Sacred Site of Wirikuta. This management plan, drafted between 2006 and 2008, was an outcome of several meetings that incorporated an overview of pressing environmental conflicts in the reserve, land use agreements for different parties (including small farmers), and a list of actions needed to ensure the protection of the area’s ecosystems (Gobierno del Estado de San Luis Potosí 2008:7–8). In 2007, as part of this project, several Wixaritari participated with state agencies in mapping this historic pilgrimage site (Gobierno del Estado de San Luis Potosí 2008:9). The 261-page document explored changing land uses in Wirikuta, their impacts on local ecosystems, and the ways in which these transformations directly violate international agreements on the territorial and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, as well as national and international accords to protect Mexico’s biodiversity.

Despite the lure of temporary employment, preoccupation over the health and environmental effects of industrial and extractive activities in the region has also increasingly troubled local residents, many of whom are small farmers whose secondary occupations may include work in the tourism, mining or agro-industrial sectors. With these different concerns in mind, a 2013 publication by the Wirikuta Defense Front (FDW) demanded that the site be named a Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site that (1) is free of all mining activity (prospecting and exploration at any stages); (2) receives remediation from previous mining activities; (3) prohibits all agro-industrial projects that require a change of land use from

“non-traditional” practices; (4) all productive activities must be subject to the rules established in the Management Plan and not violate the territorial rights of the local inhabitants nor the ecological balance of the region (FDW 2013:18). Despite these protections established through years of research across institutions, corporate economic interests sought access to the region’s resources by emphasizing market along with a smattering of philanthropic promises.

Mining the Sacred and the Trick of Philanthropy

What we have is a very well structured global organisation that takes spaces, controls governments and coordinates strategies to advance and capture local communities (Claudio Garibay Orozco, book presentation for *Una de Vaqueros por Wirikuta*, 23 April 2015, Mexico City).

In 2009, mining concessions located within the Natural and Cultural Reserve of Wirikuta were granted by Mexico’s Secretary of the Economy to two Vancouver-based Canadian corporations. The act directly violated the aforementioned laws and the International Labour Organization’s Convention 169, which determines that all indigenous peoples must have prior and informed consent for projects affecting their territories. Revolution Resources’ *Proyecto Universo* received 147,467 acres or 42.56% of the protected region’s surface area, while First Majestic Silver received 15,632 acres. In sum, 70% or 239,692 acres of Wirikuta became conceded through Mexican companies working in coordination or, as some claim, acting as fronts for the Canadian corporations. Soon after the news of the concessions broke in the summer of 2010, Wixárika authorities and other long-time advocates of Wixárika rights began investigating the process through which the concessions were given in order to find the legal means to halt mineral exploitation in Wirikuta.

But mining proponents—including some local politicians and residents—also claim that the region’s history of mining is as much a part of the cultural and economic fabric of the region as Wixárika sacred sites. During the colonial period, the area currently known as the state of San Luis Potosí was part of a web of mining in central Mexico. In fact, San Luis Potosí owes its name to the highly productive mines of the Cerro de San Pedro (located southeast of Wirikuta) which were compared to the infamous Bolivian mine of Potosí, known as the “mouth of hell” because of the hundreds of thousands of lives that were lost in what is considered one of the Spanish Crown’s most lucrative mining ventures. Soon after the city of San Luis Potosí became a hub of mining wealth, the nearby region of the Sierra de Catorce became an important point for mineral exploitation, making the town of Real de Catorce a centrepiece of silver production. Nestled between mountains that stand at 9000 ft, Real de Catorce today is known as a “ghost town” where the ruins of the mining aristocracy’s homes and *haciendas* overlook the semi-desert plateau’s awesome expanse, peppered with small farming hamlets and the railroad that cuts across the landscape, carrying goods and migrants to the north.

But while mining is often associated with the brutality of these first colonial centuries, the bulk of mineral exploitation in Mexico has taken place under the administrations of Vicente Fox (2000–2006) and Felipe Calderón (2006–2012)

that collectively granted 88,957,937 acres of concessions to transnational corporations; representing 90% of all concessions since the Mexican Revolution began its consolidation of power in 1920 (Garduño and Méndez 2015). The combination of global consumption of metals, coupled with Mexico’s 1992 constitutional reforms and the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) deregulated foreign mineral exploration and exploitation, opening the floodgates for this latest mining boom. This shift began with the implementation of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s that culminated with the modification of Article 27 of the constitution which had enshrined the nation’s land tenancy and subsoil resources as components that could not be bought and sold, much less by foreign entities.⁵ The amendment to Article 27 effectively broke with this pact by allowing for both the land and its resources to enter various scales of market transactions. With far less media and political attention, modifications were also made to a series of associated laws, including those related to water, industrial residues and environmental protection (López Bárcenas 2013).

It should be of no surprise that the conjuncture between these amendments and the passing of NAFTA benefitted Canadian and US corporations interested in Mexico’s mineral resources—most of which remain unexploited. Currently the Banco de México places mining as the nation’s fourth largest source of income, after the automotive industry, oil and transnational remittances (López Bárcenas 2013). It is also notable that the boom in mining concessions during the first decade of the 21st century has overwhelmingly favoured Canadian transnational corporations that direct 73% of the country’s mining projects (López Bárcenas 2013).⁶

The joining of these global market forces with Mexico’s own neoliberal political reforms summons Karl Polanyi’s analysis of the crises that emerge when society and political structures submit to economic forces (Polanyi 2001). The dislocations caused by the supremacy of the market in attempting to define social and political relations unleash what Polanyi called the “double movement” where people seek to protect themselves from the effects of the commodification of land, labour and money. The double movement thus makes itself present in the widespread contestation by local communities that live in and around mineral-rich areas and have progressively, yet often unsuccessfully, resisted the contemporary mining boom. Because many of these communities are indigenous, this resistance has drawn on the Zapatista uprising of 1994 and the emergence of global indigenous rights movements that shaped Mexico’s constitutional amendments recognising the country’s “pluriculturalism” and the rights of indigenous peoples to actively preserve their land-based cultural traditions.

In 2002, critiques and lawsuits against mining corporations fuelled the corporate “global mining initiative” that adopted the rhetoric of environmental sustainability and the rights of impacted communities (Claudio Garibay Orozco, 23 April 2015, Mexico City). Additionally, the International Mining Council established a Mining Task Force seeking to influence the practices of international and national governmental entities and bring with it a kit for enacting “community development” (ibid.). Statements regarding social and environmental responsibility are emphasised on the websites of these corporations alongside claims that Mexico

offers a prime climate for the mining business due to “competitive advantages” that include “political and financial stability”, the existence of free trade agreements, “strategic geographical location” and the presence of qualified human labour. Furthermore, Goldcorp cites “low political risk” to its investors, drawing on historical mining linkages and a commitment to philanthropy:

Our mines and projects are located in regions where mining has been practiced for generations, where it is a proud profession and well-understood tradition. This is a deliberate emphasis, and it represents a desire to work for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders. We continually strive to conduct our business in a socially, economically and environmentally respectful and responsible manner.

At every Goldcorp operation, our contributions extend to infrastructure improvements, to construction and assistance with schools and hospitals, to engaging local suppliers whenever possible (Goldcorp 2016).

Unfortunately, these statements lose credibility when analysed empirically. Research by geographers Claudio Garibay and Alejandra Balzaretti on Goldcorp’s operations in the impoverished, and highly volatile southern state of Guerrero show a very different story. As the third largest gold company in the world, Goldcorp’s structure rests on high productivity and low cost of operations by using highly technified extraction processes throughout the chain of production (in this case open pit mining that utilises large concentrations of toxic inputs and outputs), an austere and low-paid labour force, widespread subcontracting, coercive land acquisitions from small tenants (largely handled by Mexican affiliates), and the transfer of environmental and social “externalities” to the local communities where they operate (Garibay and Balzaretti 2009:94). As a result of these practices, the company’s production costs for each ounce of gold are as little as 18% of the final sale price. These findings also show that for each US\$1000.00 of gold extracted and sold, the corporation and its chain of affiliates receive US\$999.26 and the communities in question receive the remaining 74 cents (Garibay and Balzaretti 2009:100).

Utilising prior theorisations by Marcel Mauss (1923/24), Marshall Sahlins (1977) and Claudio Lomnitz (2005), Garibay and Balzaretti conclude that mining presents an example of “asymmetrical negative reciprocity” where “one actor subordinates the other and imposes a regime of coercion organized for the systemic extraction of wealth” yet where the former—through promises of economic revitalisation—presents its extractive enterprise as a “gift” to the impacted communities (Garibay and Balzaretti 2009:93). Particularly since the passage of NAFTA, the economic and social desperation that many small farmers experience presents a golden opportunity for the transnational extractive industry’s model of social and environmental responsibility. Aside from job creation, these companies make commitments to philanthropy by promising the construction of schools, clinics, water treatment facilities and even cement and paint donations for local public works. Furthermore, in what Garibay and Balzaretti designate as “community entrapment”, Mexican affiliates of these corporations focus on seeking approval from local farmers who own the land rights and can become a part of the labour force,

thereby creating sharp divisions between those community members who support mining and those who do not (Garibay and Balzaretti 2009:93). Local divisions around mining thus become everyday interpersonal conflicts that are compounded by the larger health and environmental impacts of the industry.

And while Goldcorp aspires to engage “local suppliers whenever possible”, the vast majority of machinery is also brought from out of the country, leaving Mexico to merely supply the landscape through its resources and a diminishing workforce (Garibay 2015). In contrast to the colonial extractive boom where the mining elite built ornate towns and cities with gold crusted churches and remained part of a local, albeit stratified population, the wealth accumulated by today’s mining elite flows northward to cities like Vancouver. This dynamic illustrates geographer Gray Brechin’s (1999) “pyramid of mining”, where the industry carves into the subsoil and, with this capital, erects skyscrapers in a striking inversion of movements activated by the wholesale transfer of wealth from one region to another; in this case, carving into the southern earth in order to build wealth at the limits of the northern skyline.

With this context in mind, resistance to mining activities has widened its appeal through expanding national and international NGOs and social media networks. And while mining companies attempt to display their empathy toward the places and people where their operations take place, evidence points to their simultaneous collusion with private security and extrajudicial forces that persecute local activists through acts that range from quotidian intimidation to incarceration and murder.⁷ Even new legislation that slows down the approval process for projects in order to meet guidelines around environmental impact and the free and informed consent of stakeholders has been met with strong disapproval from the industry. In October 2016, a Mexican associate of a private energy firm referred to opponents of energy projects as “environmental Talibans and Talibans of indigenous rights” for threatening to halt said projects and “destabilise” the nation’s economic engine (Meana 2016). Considering the deepening stakes in the transnational extractive industry, the next section outlines the hopes and actions of these “environmental and indigenous rights Talibans”.

Affect, Coalition Building and the Crisis of Representation

Upon the alert of mining concessions in Wirikuta, a meeting was held in Real de Catorce in September 2010, bringing together people concerned with the effects of mining on the region’s ecology and economy. From this encounter emerged a coalition formed under the name *Frente en Defensa de Wirikuta Tamatsima Wa’haa* (FDW). Within months, the coalition would act in conjunction with the leadership of the Regional Wixárika Council (*Consejo*), a council made up of Wixárika traditional and civil representatives from different communities. Early on, the local press of San Luis Potosí referred to the opponents of the concessions as “pseudo-defenders” who were keen on manipulating Indians into resisting mining and, by doing so, positioned the Wixaritari against the local residents who desperately needed the employment offered by the mining industry.

During the ensuing four and a half years, the FDW created several committees to take charge of the legal defence and coordinate activities that would publicise the conflict and raise funds to sustain defence actions and the movement of activists between western Mexico, Mexico City, Wirikuta and abroad. Within the first two years of mobilisation, commissions were sent to the International Climate Forum in Cancún (2010), the United Nation's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York (2011) and to a First Majestic Silver shareholders' meeting in Vancouver (2010). Meanwhile, the Communication and Arts Committee organised several concerts, auctions, art shows and student forums, primarily in Mexico City.

When there are so many communities in Mexico struggling against territorial dispossession as a result of transnational projects, why did Wirikuta successfully awaken the interest of the national and international public? What galvanised a non-Wixárika public to ally themselves to a geography and cultural worldview not of "their own"? Through affective ties, Wirikuta became inserted into a network of activists connected with contemporary indigenous struggles such as the Cherán community of Michoacán's autonomous organisation and resistance to military, paramilitary and drug trafficking interests. In part, affect can be understood as "everyday emotional understandings" (Thrift 2008:221) and these communities of activists coalesced around a shared emotional understanding of Cherán's autonomous model and, later, the brutal disappearance in 2014 of 43 rural school students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero. The conflict over Wirikuta presented a promise of indigenous agrarian models for alternative cultural, economic and political organisation while exposing the dangers of state-facilitated transnational extractivism in culturally and ecologically cherished territories.

The stillness of Wirikuta's semi-desert and the solitude of its dispersed and relatively small population might give the impression that large extractive projects or toxic waste facilities are justified. Yet a passing view may not appreciate the region's many oases of water or the unique value of the semi-deserts' flora and fauna. The formal and informal interviews I have conducted with Wixárika allies all share a strong affinity to Wirikuta's geography, in many cases due to the transformative experiences they have had along its impressive cactus-littered landscape. Based on this initial geographic encounter, many *mestizo* visitors then turned to Wixárika culture in order to obtain spiritual clues that could describe and sustain their peyote experiences in the desert plateaus. For example, the lead vocalist of the popular alternative rock band Café Tacuba and a vocal supporter of the Wirikuta solidarity movement, Rubén Albarrán, had visited the semi-desert during his adolescence and almost 20 years later initiated a relationship with Wixárika culture (interview, 30 November 2015). Undoubtedly, peyote is a nodal point in the creation of affect for a place and a cultural matrix that appears diametrically opposed to the modes of modern urban life that so many of my informants (both Mexican and foreign) sought to exit.

As noted by Steve Pile, the study of affect is not concerned with the actions of a singular body but with the "interactions between bodies and flows of affect" (2009:11). In this way, affect is the "moving map of passions making their way hither and thither" (Thrift 2008:229) that is revealed through affective techniques

or appeals such as the slogan, “Wirikuta: Sacred Heart of Mexico”, and actively used symbols like the *tsikiri* or God’s Eye.⁸ These overt spiritually imbued affective ties are most visible via the psychonauts who travel between the ayahuasca regions of South America, the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca for psilocybin mushrooms, the mystical valley of Tepoztlán and the semi-desert of Wirikuta. These psychonauts are easily caricaturised as hippies, yet many are part of transnational networks that seek alternative forms of living, sampled in large part from real or romanticised models of indigeneity and conceptions of “oneness” with the earth. While some focus on Wirikuta as a source of personal therapy through the use of peyote, others have attempted to become active participants in small hamlets of the semi-desert through permaculture and other alternative development projects.

In July 2015, I met a Spanish woman who had been running a hostel for several years in *Estación Wadley*, one of the many small localities along the railroad that traverses Wirikuta. I wondered why a foreigner would decide to come to such a desolate location to raise her family. One afternoon, under the shade of a tree, the Spaniard peeled a peyote and explained to me that in her view “Madrid is the desert and [Wirikuta] is pure abundance”. There she was, sitting beside an Argentinian friend who, after several years of raising her own children in Wirikuta, had moved with her Mexican husband to La Cruz de Huanacastle, Nayarit to open a pizza shop and earn a living near another coordinate of Wixárika culture’s sacred geography. On that same trip, I met several other urban exiles from Mexico and Europe who were driven to the desert in a utopic effort to insert themselves into various incipient efforts to build alternatives to mining or simply seek a life in a remote region of Mexico. Many of the FDW’s most active organisers were compelled to act because they believed that the conflict in Wirikuta robustly represented the costs of unregulated large capital projects on the social and environmental welfare of the country and the world. In this sense, not all activists utilised the cultural lens of the sacred to argue against the mining concessions. A geography student involved in the FDW noted that people who allied themselves to the cause did so through “different registers” that impelled a new generation to engage with the conflict from their respective places (interview, 19 October 2016).

In this way, we can observe how both natural and cultural spaces are perceived through an affective lens, understood by Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze as an “encounter” between two bodies, “one body which is said to act on another and the other receives the trace of the first” (Deleuze 1978). In this formulation, representation is a point of departure for understanding the “ensemble of relations” that compose each body’s “power of being affected” and the actions that are shaped by the intersection of these various affected traces and ensembles. Taking from Spinoza, a body’s capacity is not defined in isolation but in its relation with others and through a process that is always in construction; demanding ethical, aesthetic and political work at once (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:3). As such, affect is always in a state of emergence and in movement as it “marks a body’s *belonging* to a world of encounters but also, in *non-belonging*, through all those far-sadder (de)compositions of mutual in-compossibilities” that stem from encounters that

cross distinct social groups and spaces (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:2). The bodies at hand may be those of the different social actors involved in the struggle against mining, but we may also consider the body to be Wirikuta itself through its own “capacity to affect” and be affected by the political, economic and cultural forces set forth by these same human actors. Affect is then both a discursive and practical encounter that activates the distinct potentialities to transform a shared future.

The threat to a space that had gifted its visitors such a singular experience served as a mobilising force that other geographies of Mexico did not offer in quite the same way. In fact, indigenous opposition to tourist development along the sacred Wixárika coastal site of Haramara and the Las Cruces hydroelectric dam that is in the process of construction along the Santiago River in Nayarit have not awakened the same level of support. The participation of allies in a resistance movement led by indigenous peoples in the name of a specific territory imbued with cultural, political and ecological symbolism is part of what Judith Butler describes as “an active and deliberately sustained relation” between different bodies in movement (Butler 2015:9). In other words, the productive effects of affect toward Wixárika culture and the Wirikuta landscape reflect intentional efforts by members of the FDW to hold these “sustained” relations of resistance to transnational mining across ethnicity, race and geographical location. But as we shall see, affect toward Wirikuta and indigeneity do not translate into allies making conscientious efforts to meet the Wixaritari “on their ground and in their time” (Barker and Pickerill 2012:1719).

The momentum gained in these first mobilisations and the broad reception of the struggle amongst anti-mining, indigenous rights and environmental activists appeared tireless. During 26–27 October 2011, the FDW announced the “Working Days to Save Wirikuta: Sacred Heart of Mexico” launched at a well attended press conference, and followed by meetings with academics and students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and representatives from the country’s environmental protection agencies. On 27 October, after an early ceremony at the Cuicuilco pyramid on the southern end of the city, Wixárika authorities and a large group of sympathisers returned to the central city to march along Mexico City’s Reforma Avenue, from the landmark Angel of Independence to the presidential residence of Los Pinos. Following hours of marching alongside a flatbed truck carrying sound equipment that projected speeches and musical performances, 3000 marchers reached Los Pinos and placed god’s eyes along the building’s perimeter fence, while a young Wixárika lawyer entered the presidential residence and handed President Calderón a statement of opposition to the mining concessions.

As the national and local media increasingly covered the story, the FDW proposed an unusual reunion of Wixárika communities and non-Wixárika allies at Xeunari or the Burnt Peak; the place where the Wixárika say the sun first emerged—located one hour by horseback from the town of Real de Catorce. The February 2012 gathering was called a “*peritaje tradicional*” or “traditional expert study” where erudite Wixárika elders, known as *kawiterutsiri* and *maraka’ate* (shamans), would announce their studied reasons behind their opposition to the mining

concessions granted on 70% of this sacred territory. This declaration was later supported by a network of scholars specialising in archaeology, anthropology, toxic residues, hydrology and mining. Never had such a large gathering of people been recorded at the peak of this mountain, much less with the deliberate notion of placing apparently traditional forms of spiritual and cultural expertise into dialogue with scientific experts. Wixárika communities put aside their respective divisions and made the long journey, while tribal representatives from the US and Canada, journalists, scholars and NGOs also arrived in a marked show of force. While many activists disagreed around the potentially negative impacts such a large gathering would leave on local residents who favoured or were undecided about mining, the gathering presented a unique opportunity to draw media and government attention to the conflict and push for a resolution. Beyond the strategic importance of the *peritaje tradicional*, non-Wixárika allies who attended felt a privileged sense of solidarity with the Wixaritari. Yet this sentiment was not felt by all who were present that day, as some anecdotes shared with me by Wixárika attendees pointed to the entitlement that many of the non-indigenous allied leaders exerted through their physical placement in the central circles “designated” for Wixárika elders or through decisions to block visiting tribal authorities from approaching the central circles.

Several months later, the activities of the FDW reached their height with the WirikutaFest held on 26 May 2012 at the Foro Sol concert venue in Mexico City. Organised by an artist collective called AHO Colectivo, the WirikutaFest brought together some of Latin America’s biggest rock and pop acts, including Café Tacuba, Los Caifanes, Julieta Venegas and Calle 13. Led, in large part by Rubén Albarrán, the event also provided associated activities that appealed to AHO Colectivo’s New Age sensibilities such as *temascales* (a type of sweat lodge), tipis, and various stands promoting artisanal goods heavily inspired by “indigenous” worldviews and lifestyles. Some Wixárika musical groups also performed to a crowd that included fellow Wixaritari bused in from the Western Sierra Madre.

The WirikutaFest presented another important turning point for the movement that now sought to be more inclusive of the residents of Wirikuta previously sidelined by the almost exclusive attention that had been given to the Wixaritari by both activists and the media. By this point, it was clear that the social and economic conditions affecting the small farmers of Wirikuta needed to become a key part of the efforts to defend Wirikuta; not only in the name of indigenous cultures and the environment, but also in the name of the local population that holds a deep connection to the territory—no matter their views on the mining concessions. In fact, one of the objectives behind the music festival was to use part of the money raised to support seed projects in Wirikuta that could serve as economic alternatives to the extractive industry. In a last minute decision, activists based in Real de Catorce also organised buses to take mestizo residents from Wirikuta to be a part of the audience.

Following the WirikutaFest, the FDW’s public activities decreased as the coalition moved to focus its energy on the continued legal defence strategy and the administration of the funds. Within weeks of the WirikutaFest, a call for projects was announced, bringing in proposals from several organisations. Uneven access

to the internet and the rush that some placed to receive and approve proposed projects, prevented both Wixaritari and local Wirikuta residents from entering the call for projects. Ultimately, the funds were distributed amongst two of the main non-governmental organisations of the FDW for administrative, legal and communications work, and to a few projects in Wirikuta that included a reforestation initiative, ecological latrines, chicken coops, and the fomentation of artisanal products from the region such as balms and conserves. The *Consejo* also received a portion of the money to cover expenses related to their movements to and from their communities.

While the events that transpired between the fall of 2010 and May 2012 galvanised a large national audience and a growing international solidarity movement, the decision-making within the FDW did not reflect that the *mestizo* allies were following “the arrow” of Wixárika leadership. Rather, the lack of access that rural Wixaritari and the semi-desert’s residents have to internet-based communication, coupled with some activists’ desire to be in the limelight, led to an eroding sense of equality within the movement. Central to this is a disparity in the process of decision-making itself. While Wixárika communities tend to make accords through detailed and time-consuming assemblies that often require community consensus, the *mestizo* organisations operated on a time scale that was anathema to this slower consensual decision-making. While Wixaritari complained of being left out, some *mestizo* activists thoughtfully tried to defend themselves by arguing that they had to respond proactively to the legal and political processes that could not afford to be put on hold in the spirit of a more participative model. The crisis of representation that many signalled also was apparent in the strategic divisions between the *Consejo* and another Wixárika organization, *Unión Wixárika the Centros Ceremoniales*, the latter which, from the beginning, distanced itself from the FDW’s activities and questioned the legitimacy of its *mestizo* leadership, opting instead to work with governmental authorities.

As divisions grew internally, some organizations and people began to leave the FDW, preferring to continue their solidarity work independently, while the core organizations resumed the defence work. In the summer of 2014, just four years after the struggle had ignited, Revolution Resources cancelled its plans in the Wirikuta Reserve, while First Majestic Silver announced a temporary hold on its activities. For geographer and mining scholar, Claudio Garibay, this was an important victory in an otherwise grim national context for the majority of communities affected by mining.

Towards a Critical Solidarity

In April 2015, the *Consejo* called for a meeting on the outskirts of Guadalajara to share updates from the various committees and discuss new organisational strategies. The *Consejo* had held a closed-door meeting the previous day where the legal, communications, and technical committees were restructured, replacing all *mestizos* with Wixaritari of various professions and ages. I had not physically attended a FDW meeting since September 2012, shortly after the WirikutaFest. This time, there were far fewer participants, particularly on the non-indigenous

front. The director of the lead NGO involved in the FDW and a long-time supporter of Wixárika territorial defence did not expect to find that the *Consejo* had reassigned all of the membership of the committees to Wixaritari (interview, 15 June 2016). That morning, to the surprise of the non-indigenous allies, the FDW would be dismantled at the *Consejo*'s request and no longer would serve as a representative body of action for the protection of Wirikuta. The *Consejo* requested that the FDW's leadership hand over all documents and the remaining funds from the WirikutaFest.

A young engineer, who had spent several years working for the abovementioned NGO, responded by citing the dissolution of the *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* in 2005, articulating that the dissolution of the FDW did not mean an end to the activities of the non-Wixaritari with respect to Wirikuta. Simply, it was a new stage in the organisational structure of the movement. Yet discomfort was in the air as each subsequent ally presented their committee reports to an unimpressed Wixárika constituency. A native of Mexico City spent an hour recounting the process through which his non-profit organisation had undergone to propose Wirikuta be advanced by UNESCO to the status of World Heritage Site. A doctoral student from Mexico City reported on the various artistic events organised to retain and expand public interest and promote some of the goods that were produced with funds from the WirikutaFest. The lawyers presented some updates on the ongoing legal defence, and a young blond Mexican man who had recently returned from studying permaculture in Switzerland presented vague updates on projects taking place in the semi-desert, arguing for a renewed focus on the promises of ecotourism.

In the ensuing months, the *Consejo*, led in part by Ubaldo Valdéz, a university graduate known for his unforgiving oratory style, held meetings throughout Wixárika territory in an effort to redefine the terms of action and emphasise an autonomous politics. The conditions for Wixárika unity upheld that non-indigenous individuals and organisations would need to step to the side due to accusations of lack of financial transparency and for practices that—albeit well intentioned—sometimes foreclosed Wixárika speech and decision-making. In a press conference held by the *Consejo* in August 2015, its representatives welcomed the continued support and collaboration of non-Wixaritari in the struggle to defend Wirikuta, yet emphasised that the practices of NGOs and other supporters needed to be more cautious about not replicating State forms of top-down decision-making.

Jürgen Habermas described solidarity as a form of “standing in for one another”, while etymological roots to the word point to both Roman and English understandings of the term as related to a collective debt where one can act to cancel the debt of another member of the collective body (Hoelzl 2004:46–51). In his examination of solidarity's own genealogy, social theorist Michael Hoelzl notes that “[s]olidarity is defined as a type of relation of interaction characterized by the mutual participation of two people in one another's biography”. Yet this conception is grounded on the notion that solidarity arises from symmetrical relations. In this respect Hoelzl notes that solidarity between two bodies cannot be

separated from unequal power relations that, furthermore, are not sufficiently reflected upon by the actors at hand:

The result of this incomplete reflection is an imbalance between the self-consciousness of the master and the self-consciousness of the slave. Because of this asymmetrical relationship between the master and the slave, the *asymmetrical act of solidarity* (i.e. the act of *standing in for another*) is understood as a deficient mode of reciprocal solidarity (Hoelzl 2004:48).

Picking up Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Hoelzl's analysis points to the role that self-consciousness and reflection play in this attempt of "standing in for another", while understanding how one's social position in relation to other actors, and the historical legacies behind this standing, becomes essential for enabling more symmetrical acts of solidarity across racial, ethnic and spatial differences. In fact, these relations are relevant to Garibay and Balzaretti's cited work on mining's "negative asymmetrical reciprocity" as it reflects similar dynamics between NGOs and civil society, and the Wixaritari and semi-desert inhabitants.

As Diane Nelson notes in the case of Guatemala's Civil War: "The work and affect of solidarity ... is precisely about the interplay between identity and difference, the intimate and the distant across different transnational frontiers". As such, solidarity "consciously forms alliances, trying to remain alert and respectful to difference while seeking common spaces through which a radical politics can be built" (Nelson 1999:48–50). Perhaps in the haste of mobilising to stop the transnational corporations from digging into the mountains of Wirikuta, there was little time to reflect upon and transform the inner workings of the FDW and its accompaniment of the *Consejo*. Geographical distance and different epistemic roots to social organisation amongst the growing coalition often prevented the pursuit of "common spaces" that would lead to a consensual vision of what the defence of Wirikuta meant in relation to broader struggles for the cultural rights of native peoples and the environment. The heterogeneity of the coalition also meant that a "common space" would be challenging not only because there was no centre to the movement, but also because not everybody shared an idea of a "radical politics". So while some Wixárika and non-Wixárika alike were clear in their articulation of an anti-capitalist struggle rooted in indigenous cultures and environmental sustainability, many Wixaritari were more focused on continuing to retain their longstanding and relative autonomy, while some non-Wixaritari allies held an approach that favoured a cultural-spiritual perspective that strayed away from more political discussions.

During a break at another *Consejo* press conference held at Guadalajara's Jesuit university on 6 November 2015, Valdéz told me that, too often, ideas and practices of solidarity were distorted by replicating hierarchies of power linked to colonial, Western and capitalist models of social and political organisation. Ironically, for many Mexicans who remember the presidential regime of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994), the word solidarity brings back memories of the *Programa Nacional de Solidaridad*, an infrastructure-oriented social programme established alongside the unleashing of neoliberal reforms of the Salinas years. The *Solidaridad* programme was administered from the offices of Mexico City's technocratic elite

who facilitated the free-fall that the rural and urban poor would experience throughout the next two decades as a result of market-oriented political and economic restructuring. No quantity of asphalt for some neighbourhoods or newly built but underfunded schools dispersed through the countryside could offer even a glimpse of sustained change for the targeted communities. *Solidaridad* became an empty term that exposed the nation’s deep social divides manifested through the very spatial segregation that is maintained between the country and the city, and within the various neighbourhoods of the growingly heterogeneous cities themselves.

Valdéz shared this mental map and suggested that rather than solidarity, what indigenous peoples needed was for non-indigenous allies to become involved in “processes of positive accompaniment” to their struggles (interview, 6 November 2015). Utilising a decolonial lens, we needed to find a way to walk together but not step on each other’s feet. We needed to be more attentive to creating horizontal structures of social mobilisation, lest we replicate the top-down and neo-colonial State practices indigenous communities often denounce. Clearly, the personal sacrifices made during the first years of the movement had brought about a level of exhaustion for many of the people involved, while the finances of the FDW and *Consejo* heightened any extant tensions amongst members of the coalition. Today, the most notable shift has taken place through a strengthening of ties between activists who had conformed the FDW, local inhabitants of the semi-desert, and the Catholic Diocese who have become increasingly vocal about their opposition to a toxic waste facility in the locality of Santo Domingo, as well as the ongoing effects of mining on local resources. This second wave of non-indigenous mobilisation explicitly cites Pope Francis’s May 2015 *Encyclical Letter* regarding “the care of our common home” that states how “the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (Pope Francis 2015:3). On 7 December 2017, Guadalcázar declared itself the first municipality in San Luis Potosí to be free of mining.

The recent events surrounding the defence of Wirikuta reflect engrained inter-racial and geographic tensions that stand at the interface of law, territory and culture. These conflicts also reflect the tension between distinct epistemologies, and most importantly the embrace by the non-indigenous of indigenous land-based practices. From the past seven years of research and accompaniment of the movement to defend Wirikuta, many participants seek a transformation in the economic, political and socio-cultural organisation of both Mexican and global society. Many allies of the FDW have pursued this vision through continued work with rural and urban communities: some are creating permaculture projects in cities and the countryside, some are reflecting on the movement through contributing to scholarly discussions and publications, and others have gone on to document other similar social movements in an effort to expose both the threats that indigenous territories are facing as well as the successes some are having in their efforts to resist.

When the FDW was dismantled, a period of self-reflection began for Wixárika communities and the *Consejo*. Wirikuta is not the only battlefield as the Las Cruces hydroelectric dam began construction in Nayarit and as the community of Wuatía

faces off with mestizo ranchers over a decades-old territorial dispute along the border of Jalisco and Nayarit. With so many simultaneous struggles, some *mestizo* allies worry whether the *Consejo* has the capacity to face these challenges, particularly the legal maze that each battle represents. Yet a Guadalajara-based lawyer, who has spent over 20 years supporting Wixárika land claims, is confident that the new generation of Wixárika lawyers can meet this challenge without the presence of the non-indigenous intermediaries who had become a fixture for so many decades (interview, 24 October 2016).

Both Wixárika and non-Wixárika activists understand that the work that lies ahead will be carried out across different scales of action and with the continued collaboration of different segments of society that span regional, national and global networks. In their study on “inclusive solidarities”, Jennifer Rice and Brian Burke (2017:8) suggest that because “there is not one singular counter-hegemonic viewpoint”, an attention to “situated solidarities” can open space for the inclusion of distinct forms of place-based activism. But for these situated solidarities to coexist, non-indigenous allies must not only be attentive to indigenous conceptions of place, but must “consider the role that Settler people might play in Indigenous relational networks” (Barker and Pickerill 2012:1722).

For Hoelzl, “the engagement characterized by solidarity is the acknowledgment of the otherness of the other in such a way that a constructive cooperation is possible”, enabling the understanding that “self-determination and the development of the autonomous individual are only possible through social relations” (2004:48). This work is ultimately part of a long, ongoing process of building and sustaining connections across spatial and ethnic difference. In a 2015 interview, M. Jacqui Alexander notes that recognition of our “interconnectedness” reflects “that sense that we meet at a certain place and that that meeting place is crucial for who we are, and how we think, and what we do”. For many, the affective ties built between the Wixárika and the non-Wixárika over the defence of ancestral sacred territories and practices summons a form of spiritual being in the world. For others, the affective ties are more material through understandings of the impacts of extractive industries on the landscape, or through pushing forth new models of political economic and social organisation that benefit rural residents of Wirikuta, urban dwellers, and indigenous communities alike. Certainly, the meeting places that were constructed over the past seven years for the defence of Wirikuta reflect the possibilities and challenges in our relations of solidarity, but most fundamentally they expose our capacity to organise around principles of social and environmental justice.

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Endnotes

- ¹ The Wixárika (Wixaritari in plural) are also known as Huichol.
- ² In Mexico, mestizo refers to people of mixed indigenous-European descent. In this text I will use the term mestizo as synonymous with the Wixárika term *teiwari* used to refer to non-indigenous people or "neighbours", regardless of racial or ethnic background.
- ³ The Chihuahuan Desert comprises approximately 362,000 square kilometres that include large areas of northern Mexico (spanning regions within the states of Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí, Durango, Zacatecas, Coahuila and Nuevo León) as well as southwestern Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.
- ⁴ The transnational market in minerals, agro-industrial products and its externalities in the form of toxic waste are the largest threats to peyote's already scarce status. Nonetheless, there is a secondary debate occurring over the consumption of peyote by individuals who do not belong to the indigenous ethnic communities that have historically consumed peyote as part of their cultural fabric. Also, the Native American Church is currently seeking to become an incorporated religious organisation in Mexico. Both critics and proponents of the Church affirm that this southward move is partially motivated by access to peyote located in Wirikuta.
- ⁵ Article 27 was a direct result of the concentration of land among national and foreign elites, and as a result, one of the Mexican Revolution's central demands. In the northern territories, foreign ownership of the mining industry alienated peasants from their land and created an expanding number of mining proletariat who would become one of the Revolution's most radical factions.
- ⁶ Anecdotal evidence also points to a flood of clandestine mines controlled by armed groups with ties to drug traffickers, as well as an increasing presence of Chinese capital operating both legally and illegally.
- ⁷ Organisations like the Observatory of Mining Conflicts in Latin America have documented a pattern of repression and violence against the leadership of communities opposed to mining projects. This includes the case of Mariano Abarca who was assassinated by masked men in 2009 who opposed Canada's Blackfire mine in Chiapas; or the assassination of three men in 2009 who opposed mining activities in Cabañas, El Salvador.
- ⁸ The *tsikiri* or god's eye is an important symbol for Wixárika culture as its rhomboidal form with four exterior points and a fifth point at the centre represents the sacred Wixárika geography with its five cardinal points, one of which is Wirikuta.

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