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"Socios": The Contested Morality of "Partnerships" in Indigenous Community–Mining Company Relations, Northern Chile

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Resumen

En 2007, una comunidad atacameña del norte de Chile y una empresa multinacional minera de cobre renovaron un trato de diez años con respecto al uso del territorio por parte de la empresa y el impacto causado debido a la extracción de recursos de agua subterránea. Las negociaciones entre la comunidad atacameña y la empresa minera están influenciadas por la presencia de un estado remoto o incluso ausente, lo que ha marcado la historia de la industria minera, y un discurso hegemónico internacional sobre los beneficios de las asociaciones de acuerdo a la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa. Los valores morales implícitos en la idea de "socio" sirven y a la vez restringen una relación que a primera vista pareciera caracterizarse por la hegemonía del neoliberalismo, pero narrativas locales de autosuficiencia y patronazgo histórico revelan ambigüedades y raíces más profundas. Este análisis etnográfico del compromiso comunidad-empresa suscita una crítica de las condiciones de ser socios y lo enmarca en términos de controvertidas interpretaciones sobre la moralidad de las relaciones sociales y económicas. [Responsabilidad Social Corporativa, etnografía, indígena, Chile, moralidad, socios, neoliberalismo]

Abstract

In 2007 in northern Chile, an Atacamanian community and a multinational copper mining company renewed a ten-year deal relating to the company's use of territory and the impact of their extraction of subterranean water resources. Atacamanian dealings with the mining company are informed by their experience of an already remote or absent state, a history alongside the mining industry, and global neoliberal discourse

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on the benefits of "partnerships" made under the banner of corporate social responsibility. The moral values embedded in the notion of "socio" both serve and constrain a relationship that on the surface seems to be characterized by the hegemony of neoliberalism, but local narratives of self-reliance and historical patronage reveal deeper roots and ambiguities. This ethnographic examination of community–company engagement elicits a critique of the conditions of being "socios" and frames it in terms of contested understandings of the morality of social and economic relationships. [Corporate Social Responsibility, indigenous, ethnography, Chile, morality, neoliberalism, partnerships]

In 2007 in northern Chile, an Atacamanian community and a large copper mining company renewed a ten-year deal relating to the company's use of territory and subterranean water resources. The old deal had simply involved a small amount of money annually deposited in a trust fund; the new deal between the community and the company instituted a higher level of compensatory payment and created institutional arrangements for environmental reporting, as well as company–community activities relating to social and economic development. Members of the community and representatives of the company have used the phrase "we are s*ocios*," representing the notion that the parties involved in the new contractual agreement are "partners" in social and economic development. *Socios* refers to a "partnership"[1] in the form of a contract between recognized indigenous owners of the land and water and the corporate interests that have agreed to enter into a relationship as part of the process of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It invokes a relationship of mutual responsibility. In engagements between community and company, however, the sharedness of purpose that such mutuality indicates is tested by parties' differing expectations and conflicting moral judgments.

Mining in the northern regions of Chile is popularly celebrated in terms of the nation's economic growth, which is attributed to the free market policies instituted by the Pinochet regime (1973–89) and beyond to the democratic center-left and conservative parties of the present (Latta and Cid Aguayo 2012). Critics of neoliberal economic policy generally (Gledhill 2004; Harvey 2007), and in the special case of Chile, have demonstrated the broader social and environmental failings of this economic "miracle" (e.g., Bresahan 2003; Carruthers 2001; Han 2012; Harvey 2007:28; Winn 2004). Few studies, however, have considered the ways in which such policies, and key Chilean legislation on mining and water, have been implicated in social dynamics among indigenous peoples in the north (with some notable exceptions: see Carrasco 2011; Yáñez and Molina 2008, 2011). This article, then, centers on recent engagements between an Atacamanian community and a large mining company operating in territory recognized as belonging to the community, but the relationship may be compared to many others like it in the

world (Ballard and Banks 2003; Rajak 2011) and must also be understood in terms of national sociopolitical and economic change.

Any critique of the impacts and exponents of neoliberal politico-economic concepts (such as CSR) in remote places and in community–corporate "partnerships" for social development must include the fact of such partnerships being entwined in local social realities. In their talk of being *socios* with Minera Escondida Ltda. (the mining company), one community of Atacamanians appear to have "consented" to the process of neoliberalization: such assertions resonate with the "privatization of risk management" characteristic of the neoliberal subject (Rose 2006:158). However, the idea of being *socios* with the company also appeals to Atacamanian ideals of themselves as autonomous agents determining and risking their future, while at the same time necessarily linking themselves in patronage to powerful others. The heady mixture of an economic "partnership" with relationships couched in the language of moral responsibility calls to mind older literature on the moral economy, with respect and mutual aid as establishing and expressing the moral basis for extra-kin ties and the social basis for patronage (Gudeman 1971; Mintz and Wolf 1950; Rwabizambuga 2007:12–13). Such patron–client relationships were understood as mechanisms within the social system of interaction between individual, family, and society (more generally). Alongside this literature, ethnographic studies of mining contexts in Andean Latin American have focused on the intersection of indigenous peoples and global capitalism, primarily from the perspective of mine workers, labor, and gender constructs, as well as looking at consumption patterns and the reimagining of capitalism's effect (e.g., Finn 1998; Harris 1989; Nash 1979; Taussig 1980). However, the economic, laboral, and sociopolitical context of these studies, and the one I consider below, diverge in important ways. In particular, the subjectivity of Atacamanian community members in this relationship must be understood in terms of their position as indigenous peoples with special rights to territory and water, and not as workers in the mine. The conditions of indigenous peoples' relationship with international discourse (of indigeneity and of CSR) and capital is examined here in terms of the local moral forms in which they imagine outsiders entwined with the desire expressed for economic development using the idiom of neoliberalism.

The focus of Atacamanian community members is on engagement in politico-financial negotiation with mining corporations and on applying any resulting resources to modernizing, educating, protecting, and *developing* their community (see also Ferry 2002). The present work engages in a critique of the hegemony of the neoliberal subject since, on the face of it, the community asserts their corporateness and autonomy, and attempts to draw on the commitments made in the name of CSR as a form of fixed economic conditions. There is a strong current of consent to neoliberal subjectivity here: people make choices, take risks, appoint professional help, and accept the consequences, thus engaging with others as businesses, and

in so doing they appear to assent to the "universal" principals of such business relationships (Gershon 2011; Rose 2006). However, as other anthropologists have shown, an apparent hegemony of global discourses such as neoliberalism (and companion concepts such as CSR) may be "unsettled" through ethnographic studies (Gershon 2011; Gledhill 2004; Sanders 2008; Shever 2008). In this case, for Atacamanians, the "universal morality" of "responsible" business relationships put forward by CSR pundits is challenged in the lived experience of such engagements. The rhetorical, practical, and political complexities of the term *socio*, the use of which demonstrates both consent and resistance to neoliberal conditions, are explored below in order to show the character of internal (community) and external (community–company) relations.

My research involved traditional participant observation in the community of Peine, interviews with individuals there, with leaders of neighboring towns in the region, and with members of local authorities, and discussions and formal interviews with mining company staff (particularly those employed in community relations or "sustainability" programs).[2] I examine particularities of the social field of these engagements in order to critique neat or universalist analyses of relations between the community and the global company as business "partnerships" based on economic transactions.

Atacamanians: State Recognition, Mining, and Water

Peine is one of six oasis towns of varying sizes situated around the Atacama Saltpan (in the Comuna San Pedro de Atacama, II Region), two and a half thousand meters above sea level, on the edge of the Andean Cordillera in northern Chile. It has a population of around four hundred permanent residents, all but around two dozen of whom identify as indigenous, and accommodates a fluctuating population of around one to two hundred mine and contract workers.[3] Indigenous people in Peine (hereafter, Peineños) belong to a broader indigenous group recognized in Chilean state legislation as *Atacameños* (Atacamanians); they self-identify with the ethnonym *Likan Antai*. Atacamanian towns are agricultural and pastoral oases in the desert, fed by springs and snow melt rivers. Each of the Atacamanian communities around the saltpan has a distinct identity that is represented in, for example, differences in the dates and ways of celebrating religious festivals, varied agricultural practices, and political organization. Peineños understand their territory as reaching considerably beyond the town to pastoral and agricultural sites on the saltpan and to the named mountains, including particular subterranean watersheds, as well as to wetlands and meadows high in the cordillera (see also Barros 1997). These places are water sources and routes between water sources, many named in *kunza*[4]; together they form part of more extensive territorial knowledge

reaching into other areas of the Atacama as well as over the Andean cordillera that forms the national border to Argentina. Pastoral, farming, trade, and ceremonial movement was the basis of translocal life common to Atacamanian peoples (Bengoa 2004:192–93; Nuñez S. 1998) as well as Andean cultures more generally (Browman 1995; Orta 2002; Trawick 2001). Late in the 19th century Atacamanian men made temporary and permanent migrations in great numbers from their villages to the nitrates mines in the coastal cordillera, and during the 20th century, to the copper mine at Chuquicamata (Bengoa 2004:187; Finn 1998). In broader terms, there is a historical and economic connection between the mining industry and different classes of peoples in the region (Jiménez 2005); despite a cultural history of copper mining around the Salar de Atacama (Aldunate et al. 2008), Atacamanian peoples have been identified as the poorest and least fortunate "class," especially subject to cultural assimilation referred to as *chilenización* (Gundermann Kröll et al. 2003:34). In Peine, the long-serving school teacher (ca. 1960–80) is dominant in the narratives older people tell today regarding state coercion to leave behind indigenous traditions and language and ready themselves for modernization, especially in the form of the mining industry.

In the late 1970s, when mining for lithium salts began on the Atacama Saltpan adjacent to Peine, Atacamanians from the towns around the Saltpan sought work there. The proximity and development of mining activity since then has meant that, increasingly, people have not needed to emigrate to engage in wage labor, and others have returned to the area.[5] Thus, along with the negative changes brought by mining, such as limited access to old pastoral territory, pollution, and rapid change to traditional social and cultural practice, older Peineños speak of the town being enlivened with business and people when lithium mining began. Since the late 1970s, the availability of wage labor to Peineños from adjacent lithium mining operations and mining-related industry has been a significant impetus in the shift from a translocal existence in subsistence agriculture and pastoralism with some cash remittances from out-migration, to a local cash economy.[6] Today in Peine, most indigenous men have worked as wage laborers or contractors in the lithium or copper mining industries, and women run small- to medium-size shops and hospitality businesses that service both locals and the transient mining labor.[7]

On the Atacama Saltpan adjacent to the town are two lithium mines. The cordillera immediately to the south of the Saltpan is home to the world's biggest copper mine, named Minera Escondida and operated by BHP Billiton (which also has the majority share), and adjacent is Zaldívar, operated by Barrick Gold. While most adult men have some experience working in the lithium mines on the Saltpan as employees or contractors, no older men and only a handful of young men have been employed by Minera Escondida.[8] With the rise of Andean ethnic politics since the early 1990s (Gundermann Kröll et al. 2005), Peineños and, more generally, Atacamanians (as with other indigenous groups in the north

of Chile), have directly engaged mining companies in negotiations about, and protests against, the extraction of water and other resources from indigenous lands. Atacamanians have also been the subjects of community development initiatives from mining companies. Much of this engagement has involved Minera Escondida and its philanthropic subsidiary Fundación. Such matters must be considered in order to understand that Peineños do not conform solely to an imaginary of anti-mining indigenous groups (Kirsch 2007), since they have shown great readiness to seek employment, accept development projects, and enter into legal agreements with companies. There *is* also anti-mining sentiment and a resistance movement among Atacamanian community political organizations. Members of the community of Peine recount their key involvement in a regional protest in 2009, against a water extraction operation called "Pampa Colorada" by BHP Billiton, which threatened local water resources.[9] Peineños are thus openly critical of the impact that mining—and particularly the work undertaken by this company—has on territory and water, while being pragmatic in the face of a need for employment and investment in community infrastructure that does not come from the Chilean state.

National standards of environmental protection have generally been very low and there is little state regulation of the social impact of mining companies' social responsibility programs (Carrasco 2011; Larrain et al. 2010; Nuñez S. 2002; Yáñez and Molina 2008). Since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship (1989), Chilean democratic governments have introduced laws that institutionalize the recognition of indigenous communities. The *Ley Indígena* (Indigenous Law) of 1993 was implemented by the center-left democratic government (*Concertación de los Partidos Democráticos*) that followed Pinochet into power. The *Concertación* governments established an obligation on the part of the Chilean state to promote indigenous organizations and privilege certain kinds of state programs for development, while generally continuing neoliberal policy (see Gobierno de Chile (Ministerio de Planificación) 1993 [2011]; Heise 2001; Latta and Cid Aguayo 2012). For example, the Indigenous Law has broadly been subordinated to the operations of the Water Code and the Mining Code, both of which privilege commodification over indigenous (or indeed other citizens') access and use of resources (Castro-Lucic 2005).

In 2009, Chile became a signatory to the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 (C169), recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples to participate in decisions over lands and waters, as well as their right to be consulted in governance processes that concern indigenous communities or that have an impact on their territory. While CSR activities in this region of Chile were nascent, leaders of Peine and those in neighboring Atacamanian towns regarded C169's discursive recognition as having the potential to enable greater levels of protection; failing that, some believed they had gained the ability to negotiate over possible compensation for impacts, especially in relation to mining.[10] It is worth noting that

no governmental regulations for consultation derived from C169 have yet been established (at the time of writing), and while there is a system of environmental impact evaluation (Law 19.300 of 1997), there are significant weaknesses in that system, not least in the area of community consultation (Latta and Cid Aguayo 2012:167–169).

In political terms, by virtue of the Indigenous Law, Peine has "become" an "indigenous community" with special rights to surface waters (Gobierno de Chile (Ministerio de Planificación) 1993 [2011])—a corporateness that previously existed but was not institutionalized.[11] Legislative recognition of indigenous communities as *owners* of their source of surface water establishes economic rights to community subsistence resources (meaning they are able to buy and sell certain quantities), but not to all waters in indigenous territory. Negotiations over indigenous territorial rights in a broader sense are only emergent, and illegal water prospecting, large-scale unnegotiated extraction of water, and lack of community consultation before large-scale mining development continue. There is an international political discourse of indigenous rights (partially ratified by the Chilean state) at play, as well as an incorporation of community into the neoliberal politico-economic system as a limited but autonomous economic entity.

"Socios"

Atacamanians use the term *socio* to refer to an individual participant in communal activity and a member in a local social organization, and in such contexts the term has local and indigenous meanings. In Peine, while individuals are *socios*, individual membership also represents a household and family membership of and responsibility to the community. All *socios* in a community meeting are referred to as the *asamblea*: the assembly of adult and responsible members of the community who take administrative and civic responsibility. Members of each household are *socios* of the *Junta de Vecinos* (Neighbor Council) and/or the *Comunidad Indigena* (the Indigenous Community council). Both these state registered legal and administrative bodies are local expositions of bureaucracy that are integrated with traditional forms of social organization. Any *socio* is eligible to become president or serve on the directorate of either council. *Socios* must come to meetings and must undertake communal work.[12] In the four months of 2011 that I spent in Peine, I took part in 8 of the 15 days of communal work required (i.e., work in which every *socio* was expected to participate).[13] Such work was organized during meetings of the *asamblea* by a process of consensus-making; where specific roles were to be undertaken they were allotted by ballot and advertised by way of the notice boards in the main street.[14] If no person works on behalf of the household (or a *peón* cannot be found to do so) the *socio* is obliged to pay a fine.[15] With higher

employment among younger and older people in the mining boom, the roll call was, I was told, much shorter than before. In the past, a person became a *socio* as part of entering into adulthood; fines were not necessary, since everyone just got involved, but there are fewer *socios* now. There are tensions between communal obligations and individual interests that coalesce in the notion of *socio*, but not in terms of simply feeling the "impact of modernization," although people do engage such language to talk nostalgically of tradition (see also Parry and Bloch 1989).

Peineños say that before mining employment and the cash economy became dominant in their everyday lives, agricultural activity was undertaken collectively, without the current need to pay nonfamily workers. In the *minga* (collective work), all members of the community helped others in preparing, sowing, and planting fields, for example, with the promise of a meal and drinks from the landowner (Mostny 1954:77–78).[16] The tradition of *minga*, while in evidence in contemporary times, is nostalgically referred to as having dominated collective work life and is referred to as the basis for co-responsibility. The spirit of the *minga* is alive in animated calls to passers-by to join in from those working in fields, or engaged in any physical labor. Nevertheless, one person's engagement in wage labor means they must rely on those without stable employment to work for them as *peones* in their fields and when called to meet a *socio*'s obligations to communal work.[17]

To be a *socio*, a member, is to be a decision making and responsible adult resident of the community. While this is a general category, there are gradations of residence, responsibility, right, and activity. As a *socio*, a person is expected to actively contribute to communal work (or contribute payments in lieu of work), which is broadly in the interests of the community. For example, the general manager of a neighboring lithium mine married a local woman, bought land for his house and gardens, and has become a *socio* of the Junta de Vecinos; he was spoken of by one woman in terms of being "responsible to us [the town]"; another woman added, "he needs us." Thus, being a *socio* does not imply equality, but, rather, the *socio*'s understanding of the moral dimensions of individual membership and an associated respect for community. It is extended to those such as the general manager, who occupies roles including the mineworkers' boss, *socio* of the community, and financial patron.

In conversations exploring what it means to be *socio*, a number of Peineños recounted to me a narrative about water. In the early 1970s,[18] people began talking about finding a source of potable water that would cook their beans properly, and not curdle powdered milk, as the supply from the spring from which they had "always" drawn was wont to do. According to the story, the community then spent more than ten years working to finance a potable water source. Using elders' knowledge of mountain territory, they found a good source high in the cordillera. Leaders "knocked on the doors" of Chilean government departments

seeking financial assistance to pipe the water to the town below, but they were informed that the expense to the State was not considered worthwhile for such a small population. The *asamblea* of *socios* met and decided "not to sit around and wait for help." They costed the labor to undertake the first stages of the work at approximately 30 days for each *socio*, and began clearing a road and digging the channels for laying the 45 kilometers of pipes. *Socios* who did not work were expected to pay the day's labor cost to the community. *Socios* who did not work or pay, I was told, would not have the water connected to their dwellings. The shortfall in costs as well as work that had to be done by machinery was met by asking for assistance from mining and contracting companies—some of whom donated labor and machinery. Eventually, in 1995, the government department CONADI, the municipality, and three mining companies contributed some financial support to finish the project. Complaints and tensions continue to arise among *socios* over this water, since when the time came to lay the pipes in town, the outside contractors insisted on connecting all the houses, not just those of hardworking or paid up *socios*. Disappointment among older people that systems of communal work practice are no longer respected by some people, and that these social changes are supported by the state and outsiders may be "read" as nostalgia or perhaps an idealist rendering of social solidarity that draws on traditionalist ethnic politics (Ferry 2002; Harris 1989). However, tensions that arise among residents relating to communalism or individualism, autonomy and patronage, are directly relevant to the ways in which people conceptualize their politico-economic relations with outsiders.

Characteristic aspects of Latin American peasant societies can be considered to inhere in the concept of *socio*. Social solidarity engendered by the institution of the compadrazgo was seen as relevant in such societies—in terms of relations between "horizontal" and "vertical" ties, as well as in terms of patron–client relations (Mintz and Wolf 1950). Gudeman (1971) understood the compradrazgo in terms of "respect": a key dimension of the ethnographic material on value systems. Such respect (expressed in kinship terminology) also defines certain kinds of social exchange, especially among non-kin, and is present in the use of terms such as the honorific "Don" to refer to visiting or nonlocal company personnel, but also in the more ambivalent "los viejos" used by Peiñenos in reference to miners (but not in their company) (see also Shever 2008). In more recent Andean ethnography, work on local politics has focused on *vecindad* (residence) councils as they relate to citizenship politics (Albro 2010; Coronado and Fallon 2010; Kapelus 2002; Lazar 2008). Some of this work usefully draws together the complexities of "ethnic politics," which are often conceptualized in terms of resistance, with an analysis of the regional and local relations of patronage that enable people to both assert power in politico-economic relationships and give respect and allowances to more powerful others.

Atacamanians access the global discourses of CSR and indigeneity alongside national ethnic politics in their attempts to bind outsiders to them as financial partners for social development.[19] The basis of both autonomy and patronage in notions of the related individual, the *socio* reveals something about apparent Atacamanian "consent" to neoliberal conditions (Gledhill 2004). However, the concept of *socios* has local cultural depth as a concept of rights and responsibilities that links individuals and families into the broader political life of the community and the region. The term expresses aspects of Atacamanian social organization and associated moral tensions of individual interest versus community responsibility in a small-scale society; such tensions have been accentuated with the advent of the mining economy and wage labor. The application—however ambivalent—of the same term, *socios*, to the copper mining company when referencing their legal agreement indicates how some of the complexities of modern indigenous morality are applied to these external relationships.

"Partners" and Neoliberal Subjects

The legal relationship between the Peine community and the Minera Escondida company is a product of general conditions of neoliberalism in Chile, as well as a result of the country's history of foreign capital investment (Porteous 1973). Studies of particular mining company enclaves in Chile have demonstrated the historical depth of international ownership of mining and the social relations that pertain within such forms of consumption and commodity relations (Finn 1998; Klubock 1998). This private control of national mineral resources has in the past been the subject of considerable critique of social inequalities both actual and potential. In more recent years, NGOs and multinational corporations have been at the forefront of CSR programs in Chile (Beckman et al. 2009), and such programs have also been subject to strong critique (Coronado and Fallon 2010; Haslam 2007; Riesco et al. 2005; Utting 2007). Chile is particularly marked by state enablement of mining development and by negligible protection of the environment, indigenous territory, and water, and thus, an understanding of the specifics of Chilean neoliberalism helps in understanding Atacamanian experiences, actions, and approaches to the "partnership" in which they are involved.

The acceptance of economic risk in a business partnership with miners seems to indicate that indigenous leaders accept the conditions of neoliberal subjecthood—the "economic risks" they must take in order to gain community development resources. For example, Peineños use the "cultural good" of registered indigenous surface water rights as an economic good in notionally profiting from selling water. Between May and October 2011, they allowed a road maintenance contractor to buy a per liter amount of water from the runoff area of an irrigation canal on

agricultural land, to use for watering unsealed roads on which mining company vehicles traveled. The community had trouble accessing an account of the total amount of water extracted by the contractor and, months later, had still not been given a full account of water extracted, nor had they received any payment. The president of the community said to a meeting of the directorate, "Well, we should have really been asking them for those accounts before [now]." Similarly, in community meetings, and speaking of the disappointment they perceived among the mining company staff and the delays experienced in instituting elements of the contract with the company, a number of *socios* expressed the opinion that as a community they were not upholding their end of the deal. The mining company had promised to train and employ young Peineños to work in the jobs associated with the mine, which are known to be much higher paying with better conditions than the smaller lithium operation nearby. Don César told them, "Young people here are just sitting around doing nothing, just drinking." He and others saw the responsibility for action as being within the hands of older and younger community members, whom he thought needed to work harder on their own economic and social development in order to meet the expectations of the deal they had made. Nonetheless, these (rather frequent) discursive appeals to hard work and the need to accept the consequences of community risk in autonomous actions seldom referred to exacting financial gain. Rather, in speaking of such failings in their community, people refer nostalgically to communal work that in the past had meant profitable results in the creation of local infrastructure or improvements in living conditions.

A 'Development Plan' containing a raft of infrastructure, health, education, tourism, and cultural projects was put together by the community, with the aid of a consultant, as a focus for the funds gained from the deal with the mining company. A committee was formed to undertake this work, but has struggled to reach consensus decisions about how, when, and which of the projects would go ahead. During late 2011, I attended meetings about finances; one involved the president of the community, another older man, and a member of the mining company's staff. After some 20 minutes of reviewing the processes involved in getting approval and accessing community finances, the mining company representative looked up at the president and the older man, removed and then held his glasses at an angle from his cheek, and said,

> Look, you really need to spend this money ... If you don't spend the money the company asks, "Why are we giving them this money if they are not going to spend it on projects?" Huh?

Strongly urging community representatives to use the capital resources gained from the contract with the company to seek professional advice and initiate community business and social development programs is part of the process of

patronage. Moreover, the terms of this patronage are exacting: the community must spend the money on "projects" that are defined within the Development Plan.

The environmental impact of the copper mining company's extraction of subterranean water from the Cordillera is a significant concern among community members that continues to test the partnership.[20] As part of the legal agreement, independent consultants were charged with reporting on the ecological impacts of the company's water extraction, and people chose an expensive environmental consulting group from the capital to act as *their* expert.[21] The environmental consultants reported that impacts on the environment of water extraction by the four or five large companies in the region are largely unknown and need further detailed study and monitoring. Some community members told me that they are pleased with the work of the consultants, who had provided the first details of the ecological impact of water extraction and the novel suggestion of recommendations for further studies. However, the mining company has rejected the consultant's reports. I was told by a company representative that the environmental consultants had engaged in inappropriate "political" work, acting as analysts as well as offering their services for social development programs. Further reasons given by the company representatives in formal meetings with the community have employed the technical language of methodological adequacy to reject the veracity of the consultant's reports. For now, company representatives undertake annual environmental impact reporting, as covered in their legal agreement, and members of the community continue to express their need for an independent expert. In a meeting of members of the community directorate and town organizations (September 2011), the ex-president observed that the company's rejection of their environmental consultant was "a strategy for not providing us with information . . . and we are supposed to be *socios*." He explained to me later that the company had told them they were *socios* and that the company had agreed that they would assist in the development of the community.[22] These exclamations that corporations are not acting as *socios* are not naive assertions that corporations must act as moral members of society or community. Rather, they can be understood in terms of Peineños selfhood as knowledgeable locals with rights to their resources and as owners of the land and waters that are (partially) recognized as theirs under Chilean law (see also de la Peña 2005), but without the professional and economic capacity to be full partners in the business of the contractual agreement. Such capacity is envisioned in terms of needing to come at least partly from powerful others, in this case, from the company that agreed to be a "socio."

I also spoke to mining company personnel involved in community relations: they expressed a desire to work in partnership with community members on development projects, as per their contract. The community relations manager informed me during interviews on two occasions that he wished to support

economic development with the community, especially the provision of education and professionalization, and to continue to improve relations with Atacamanian people, especially Peineños. These personnel express a desire to educate members of the community in order for people to take part in their own development.[23] I encountered expressions of these desires coupled with frustration, as, seeking to work in terms of patronage, company personnel find instead community resistance or apparent apathy to the development projects and proposals they put forward.

After one community meeting in Peine at which I was present as an observer, the head of community relations at the mining company asked me to provide him a short analysis of how he could improve relations between his company and the community.[24] In the process of discussing this request with community members, I first asked an older man what the company should do: he was regarded as having significant knowledge of territory, water, and traditional matters, and had been involved in negotiations with the company since the start. He said that it was very simple: the priority was that the company "should tell the truth." An injunction to "tell the truth" is a means of moral and political positioning. The "partnership" is thus marked by a refusal of community members to accept the partnership in the way that the company personnel desire, which draws on a CSR form of morality—an ethical fiscal transfer of goods and services.

The terms of the business partnership I have outlined do not conform exactly to neoliberal economic principles, or to the moral principles of being a socio. Nonetheless, indigenous locals apparently engage with prevailing neoliberal discourse as they respond to mining company pressure to sell water, make deals with companies, and setup small businesses to take advantage of the influx of outsiders. In this they are part of a broader Chilean "consent" (in Gramscian terms) to the hegemony of neoliberalism—the economic and political conditions visible (until recently) in the significant lack of large-scale resistance to the power evident in other Latin American states (Silva 2008:230, 247, 269).[25] Despite this apparent consent to the hegemony of neoliberal subjecthood, the notion of *socios* draws on forms of Atacamanian social organization, autonomy, and subjectivity. The "partnership" in this ethnographic example is a basis for the moral discourse of global CSR—a moral code that others have shown to be misguided (Gershon 2011:546; Owen and Kemp 2012; Rajak 2011; Welker 2009). While the mining company staff engaged in community relations told me that they understood good CSR to be a moral issue, being a good *socio* does not belong to a "universal" moral code but to the particular socio-political relations in which this partnership is situated. Peineños are attempting to regulate the conditions of future mining and other corporate impact on their community and territory. These experiences inform the ways they might talk about themselves as economic actors to outsiders, representing themselves as *socios* with corporate actors in the town's development. Members of the community assert their negotiating capability in relations with

outsiders, and their effective use of professional and legal support, paid for with community funds. In initial interviews, a leader represented the situation to me in terms of local capacity to create respectful relationships with mining companies for the economic and development benefit of the community. Nonetheless, he exclaimed, "they are supposed to be *socios*!" as a judgment of the corporate partners' behavior, but also as a way of expressing some rejection of, and disappointment in, the outcomes of engagement with powerful others.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, there are many different views among Peineños, and Atacamanians more broadly, regarding whether they should collectively claim and defend their lands and waters or work as territorially defined communities to make deals for development purposes with companies and others with commercial interests in local resources. Seen by some as a significantly high-risk venture, making deals with mining companies over water also conforms to Atacamanian experience of legal representation of dubious benefit and the "trickiness" of corporate power. Peineños assume that they must do their own work and not rely on the state to help "catch" any mining company social development money, and reject the idea that state authorities will redistribute benefits gained from such monies (or do so in a way that they will experience). Nonetheless, they engage in corporate partnership with the mining company not simply in market terms, but in terms that are relevant to local understandings of being *socios*. Thus, Peineños, on the one hand, seek ways in which to make capitalist exploitation of their territory and water productive; on the other, they collectively engage in discourse on the failure of large-scale capitalism to meet their needs and compensate for damage. Discourses of the morality of being a *socio* should not be read as being about solidarity, since the instability of cultural identity, social life, and political economy are topics of daily conversation, much as the weather is. Yet, communal forms of authority and co-responsibility among Peineños do hold promise for the community's organizing potential toward desires for local development at least partly on their own terms, and offer an ongoing critical perspective on the powerful corporate actors that surround them.

The operation of neoliberalism as an economic and social system and its discursive effects are particularly dynamic in mining contexts, and this discussion has aimed at eliciting an understanding of the kinds of choices being made by actors in local, and traditionally noncapitalist, communities when faced with inevitable relationships with global corporations. De Vos (2006) writes that, in many examples across the Andean region, indigenous peoples and peasant groups have resorted to protest, since there is little recourse to national laws, which privilege

resource exploitation over other rights. While there is contention and opposition to mining, the ethnographic situation I have presented here contributes other facets to this picture, more akin to the ambiguous hope that "mining could contribute more" (Bebbington et al. 2008:887). Thus, while Peineños have joined in protesting with other Atacamanian groups, appealing (in some cases successfully) to national and international environmental and social conscience regarding the potentially most damaging of project proposals, they also seek to engage with mining corporations as a way of extracting financial benefit. "It is still hard work to get the companies to understand [us]," don Roberto told me, "but we are on this road because we have our territory claims and they are inside indigenous land." There have been material gains resulting from the economic partnership with a large corporation, but these gains should not be mistaken for an equal partnership. Perhaps, this is because, in many ways, indigenous communities are the junior partners, but they also take the highest risks: they risk their lands, waters, and their hold on the familiar in terms of economic and social organization. I have suggested that Peineños' engagement with the mining company may be read in terms of an analytic of neoliberal subjecthood; however, any such "consent" to these conditions is only partial and is answerable to assertions of indigenous territorial interests as well as to the morality of being a *socio*.

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Notes

[1] *The Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (1996) lists three meanings for "socio": 1. (*miembro*) member; 2. partner [also] *socio accionista*: shareholder, [also] *socio capitalista*: silent partner [or] sleeping partner; *socio mayoritorio*: majority shareholder; 3. buddy/mate.

[2]A total of seven months field research has been conducted in II Region, Chile, between 2009 and 2012.

[3]Personal communication, Community Health practitioner, October 2011. In my census, formed cumulatively over four months, the significant majority of permanent residents are Peineños or indigenous people of neighboring towns, married to locals. My count of nonindigenous permanent residents found that all were married to (or long time co-residents with) indigenous residents. The population of itinerant miners is based on a survey of rental accommodation undertaken October 25 to November 5, 2011. The lower estimate is derived from return fieldwork in 2012, when numbers of men had dropped considerably due to the enlargement and infrastructural improvement of a mining camp some 30 kilometers from the town, as well as the departure of some 30 contractors from the guest house (built for tourist accommodation).

[4]*Kunza* is the indigenous language that was once spoken throughout the Atacama.

[5]Historical material without reference is drawn from fieldwork conversations, household surveys, and structured interviews in the II Region, Chile, in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

[6]The disappearance of pasture due to drought years, coinciding with the arrival of mining, has also meant a significant reduction in herd populations. Individuals reported that 30 years ago each family was likely to have 100 to 300 sheep; now those flocks have between 8 to15 head of sheep.

[7]Almost every family has garden plots with corn and alfalfa and small numbers of sheep, chickens, or pigs for household and festive consumption, but agriculture is supplementary to a cash economy. Families remain highly mobile, with all children obliged to attend school in a larger town or city once past primary level; a large number of young people choose to live and work in the regional urban centers (of Calama or Antofagasta) in the years following. There are many who identify as Peineños but do not live permanently in the town. However, most enact the desire to return during the summer holidays and undertake social and moral responsibilities in religious festivals, communal work, and lively ritual and family events such as the spring planting and annual irrigation ditch cleaning.

[8]There is a significant difference, then, between Peineños' relationships with the lithium mining companies and their relationship with copper mining companies. The community has also begun to negotiate agreements and other economic arrangements with the lithium mining companies, and these negotiations have a different character to those with Minera Escondida. These differences have been introduced in other work (Babidge 2011).

[9]BHP Billiton's proposed extraction project, "Pampa Colorada," sought to extract water (for use in Minera Escondida and another copper operation in the region) from the cordillera *above* the oasis towns of the Salar, thus directly threatening their water supply. Extraction of water by the same company is the focus of the legal agreement with the community of Peine. What is different about *that* water extraction (i.e., what makes it negotiable) is that, while it is in Peine's recognized territory, it occurs in areas more distant from and *below* contemporary settlement. Rights to extract that water were also granted to the company by the *Dirección General de Aguas* (DGA) before relevant Chilean environmental laws had been passed (see below).

[10]Such negotiations are not commonplace in mining CSR practice in Chile, at least partly because many mining companies bought the rights to water before protective legislation came into effect. For example, in November 2000, in territory adjacent to Peine, one copper mining company paid US$135 million for the rights to extract water at 630.9 liters per second from existing wells in a sector of the Cordillera close to Peine (see DGA website at www.dga.gob.cl).

[11]Article 64 of Law 19.253 is one of the four articles that refer specifically to indigenous peoples of the northern regions (predominantly Aymara and Atacamanian): "Waters of the Aymara and Atacamanian communities should be especially protected. The waters that are found in the lands of the community are considered the property, ownership and use of the Indigenous Community established

by this law, including rivers, canals, irrigation ditches and springs, without prejudice to the rights that third parties have registered in conformity with the General Water Code" (my translation).

[12]The fine for not coming to meetings in 2011 was 5,000 Chilean pesos (CLP); that for not doing community work was 15,000 CLP—about US$10 and US$30, respectively. Fifteen thousand CLP is roughly equivalent to a day's unskilled labor.

[13]Such work includes cleaning the streets in readiness for religious festivals, the cemetery for the Day of All Saints, the irrigation canals for week-long annual ceremonies that mark the agricultural calendar, and erecting the *Ramada* for the local version of Chilean national celebrations. A significant amount of communal work centers on irrigation and other water issues, bearing out Trawick's (2001) argument for his case of Peru that irrigation practices in Andean societies are core economic, ecological, and moral bases for social organization.

[14]During a period of fieldwork in 2011, between July and November, there were three meetings for each of these organizations. Meetings were usually scheduled to begin at 9 p.m., to accommodate the majority of men employed on day shifts in the neighboring lithium mines, and ran until consensus on each agenda item was reached (usually until about 1 a.m. but on one occasion the meeting closed at 3 a.m.).

[15]On occasion I worked as volunteerer laborer to the community generally, and at other times as (unpaid) *peóna* for the *socio* of the household in which I lived.

[16]Another key activity, which was communal *minga* work, was *techar*—the repairing and re-roofing of the traditional-style houses (constructed of rough hewn local timbers, *chañar* and *algarrobo*, and woven cane; they are sealed with clay). Many older people spoke to me of the *minga* in nostalgic terms. Food and alcoholic drink were always plentifully provided by the host to all workers.

[17]Many men who are wage laborers or contractors and live in Peine work on the Salar de Atacama in the lithium mining industry. Others have work in Calama (300 kilometers away). Work/rest shifts vary from 15/15 to 7/7, meaning that there is time during *descanso* (the rest shift) to tend to the concerns of the community or agricultural matters.

[18]This story was told to me by a number of people, and the date of particular events shifted slightly depending on the informant. As yet, I have been unable to access state administrative records for the current research and town records are not centralized.

[19]Speaking with members of the municipal council for the region around the Atacama Saltpan about negotiations with mining interests, the (Atacamanian) mayor asserted that as Atacamanians, remote from the government authorities and occupying their own lands, they must engage with corporate interests as *socios* in their own development: "*Tenemos que ir de egual . . . egual porque nosotros, yo siempre he dicho y como alcadesa y consejala lo he dicho: nosotros somos socios. No somos los niñitos pobrecitos . . . no, socios. Sentemos en una mesa y digamos como nosotros trabajamos para el desarrollo de la Comuna*" [We have to approach them as equals because we, I have always said, and as mayor and councillor I have said: we are partners. We are not poor children, no, partners. We sit at one table and say how we want to work for the development of the region] (interview, September 2009).

[20]Water extraction by other companies with whom the community has no current contractual agreement also concerns them, of course—especially that of the largest lithium mine in the region, owned by SQM (formerly, Soquimich).

[21]Parallel to this concern is a perceived need to have "our own experts." In a meeting in which I participated (August 21, 2011), the president of the community asked me if there was a good Australian expert in environmental reports who could help them. My answer was that a Chilean or Latin American expert would be preferable for reasons of knowledge of the language, laws, and other relevant matters. Another community director noted that "our own people know this place better and

can do the reporting," and was informed by the president: "well the world is not like that; you have to have someone with specialist training to write reports that company people will listen to" (quotations paraphrased from field notes).

[22]"*Están de acuerdo en la desarrollo de la comunidad.*"

[23]A now-abolished part of the agreement between the company and the community, a training program for employment in the Minera Escondida mine, has been a consistent point of contention. Minera Escondida expects a high level of training from its employees in health and safety and in plant operation. A tiny percentage of Atacamanian young men were employed; only five individuals of the original 20 Atacamanians passed the year-long training and examinations. There are now only three young men from Peine working in Minera Escondida, and the intake program has been stopped by the company, due to it being considered too complex to run, and being implicated in intrafamily jealousy and regional labor politics.

[24]As an independent researcher, but one situated in the community of Peine, my approach was to discuss the request with members of the community and produce a short analysis of their responses for presentation to the *asamblea*; if approved, it would be passed on to the company. During interviews with personnel of Minera Escondida and its parent company BHP Billiton, I have briefly discussed my views and preliminary thoughts associated with the meetings both they and I attended with the community.

[25]Widespread student protests in Chile throughout 2011 and some of 2012, calling for free education and general government educational and social reforms, and explicitly aimed at resistance to neoliberalism, signaled an end to apparent widespread and silent consent.

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