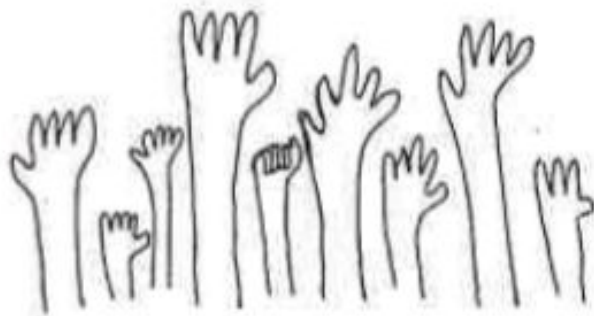


AN INTRODUCTION TO

COMMUNITY  
CONSULTATIONS  
IN GUATEMALA



THIS IS A BRIEF INTRO  
to the PRACTICE OF  
COMMUNITY  
CONSULTATIONS



SO ... WHAT IS A  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION?

IT'S AN ORGANIZING  
TOOL — "A SPACE  
WHERE AN INFORMED  
COLLECTIVE CAN MAKE  
DECISIONS REGARDING  
THE ADMINISTRATION OF  
LAND, RESOURCES, AND  
OTHER ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY  
LIFE."

LIKE A VOTE?

PARTLY! BUT  
THERE ARE OTHER ELEMENTS:

POPULAR  
EDUCATION  
BEFORE  
VOTE

DEBATE AND  
CONSENSUS-  
REACHING  
PROCESS

INDIGENOUS  
ANCESTRAL  
PRACTICE

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS  
TO COMMEMORATE COMMUNITY  
RESISTANCE

WHEN ARE THEY USED?

Indigenous & campesino  
communities use them  
when confronting

RESOURCE EXTRACTION  
PROJECTS

like GOLD, SILVER, &  
NICKEL MINES

& HYDROELECTRIC  
DAMS

IN GUATEMALA ...

the first community consultations were in 2005.

over

2 MILLION - people have participated in consultations since then.

14 of 22 departments in Guatemala have participated.

5



A consultation in Mataquescuintla, Jalapa. photo: Prensa Comunitaria

6

IN 1996, WHEN THE

36-YEAR INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT

ENDED WITH THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE ACCORDS, THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO OPEN UP MORE AND MORE TO

INVESTMENT FROM PRIVATE COMPANIES

SEEKING TO PROFIT OFF THE COUNTRY'S MANY NATURAL MANY RESOURCES

7

AND IN 1997, THE CONGRESS PASSED A

THAT

MINING LAW

✓ lowered barriers to investment

✓ cut taxes for foreign companies

✓ granted them access to local water sources

... all in the name of - DEVELOPMENT -

8

TO COMBAT THE WAVE OF EXTRACTIVE PROJECTS, LAND DEFENDERS HAVE USED CONSULTATIONS AS A STRATEGY THAT BOTH

DRAWS ON ANCESTRAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

AND

LEVERAGES THE POWER OF →

9

AN INTERNATIONAL LAW THAT RECOGNIZES INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S INHERENT RIGHT TO

FREE, PRIOR, INFORMED CONSENT

in decisions that would affect their land, water, lives, & ways of life.

→ ILO 169

10

IN SOME CASES, CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN PART OF SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO

→ STOP THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PROJECT BEFORE IT BEGAN (LIKE THE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT IN SAN PABLO, SAN MARCOS)

AND

→ TEMPORARILY SUSPEND A FULLY OPERATING PROJECT (LIKE THE SILVER MINE IN SAN RAFAEL LAS FLORES, SANTA ROSA.)

11

LUCAS JORGE, Indigenous leader in Ixquisis, Huehuetenango:

"In my community, we already held a consultation but the hydroelectric company doesn't respect it. They have invaded our territory, occupied by the Army and the police. The presence of security forces opens old wounds from what we lived through during the Internal Armed Conflict."

12



A BILL CURRENTLY  
BEFORE GUATEMALAN  
CONGRESS SEEKS  
TO CO-OPT CONSULTATIONS  
BY REGULATING THEM AS  
A STATE-CONTROLLED  
BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS  
IN ORDER TO ENSURE A  
"MORE STABLE  
INVESTMENT CLIMATE"

13

"A new form of genocide is  
hidden in this bill; as  
Indigenous Peoples, the  
State will only recognize  
our existence when a committee  
decides when, where, and how  
it wants to consult us."

- THE WESTERN PEOPLE'S  
COUNCIL (CPO) → A COALITION  
OF AUTHORITIES & INSTITUTIONS OF  
MAYA PEOPLES IN WESTERN GUATEMALA.

14

IN SPITE OF THE  
CHALLENGES OF  
CO-OPTATION  
AND VIOLATIONS  
OF THE RIGHT TO CONSULTATION,  
(INDIGENOUS & CAMPESINX)  
LAND STEWARDS  
CONTINUE TO EMPLOY THIS  
TOOL FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY  
IN THEIR FIGHT FOR  
JUSTICE & RECOGNITION

15



A consultation in  
Sacapulas, Quiché in  
April 2011. Photo: NISQUA

16

## SOURCES & FURTHER READING:

- "Community consultations:  
A model of resistance" - NISGUA  
(p. 2, 5, 11)
- "Infografía: consultas comunitarias  
en Guatemala" - CEPPAS (p. 5)
- "Guatemala court confirms  
suspension of Tahoe mining  
licenses" - Reuters, Sofi Machu  
(p. 11)
- see ACODET's community consultation  
petition on the "Take Action"  
page of MSAVA.org

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