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Ancestrality in Action

Understanding contestations and entanglements in a mangrove community-based management area

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INTRODUCTION

- Indigenous movements in Latin America and environmental struggles
- Power dynamics between indigenous movements and the State
- Goal of this paper:
 - Analyzing suitability of current resource management policies (mainly extractive purposes)
 - Ancestrality in coastal Ecuador, how it has been articulated, how it is renegotiated
 - How the concession works, how it has affected different members of the community, how it has interacted with existing power dynamics
 - From a Political Ecology perspective

ANCESTRALITY IN COASTAL ECUADOR



- Ancestral Peoples of the Mangroves Ecosystem (Latorre 2012, 2013, 2014, 2020)
- Accumulation by dispossession of mangrove forests by shrimp farming industry



ANCESTRALITY IN COASTAL ECUADOR



- Ancestral Peoples of the Mangroves Ecosystem (Latorre 2012, 2013, 2014, 2020)
- Local communities dependent on mangrove resources for livelihoods

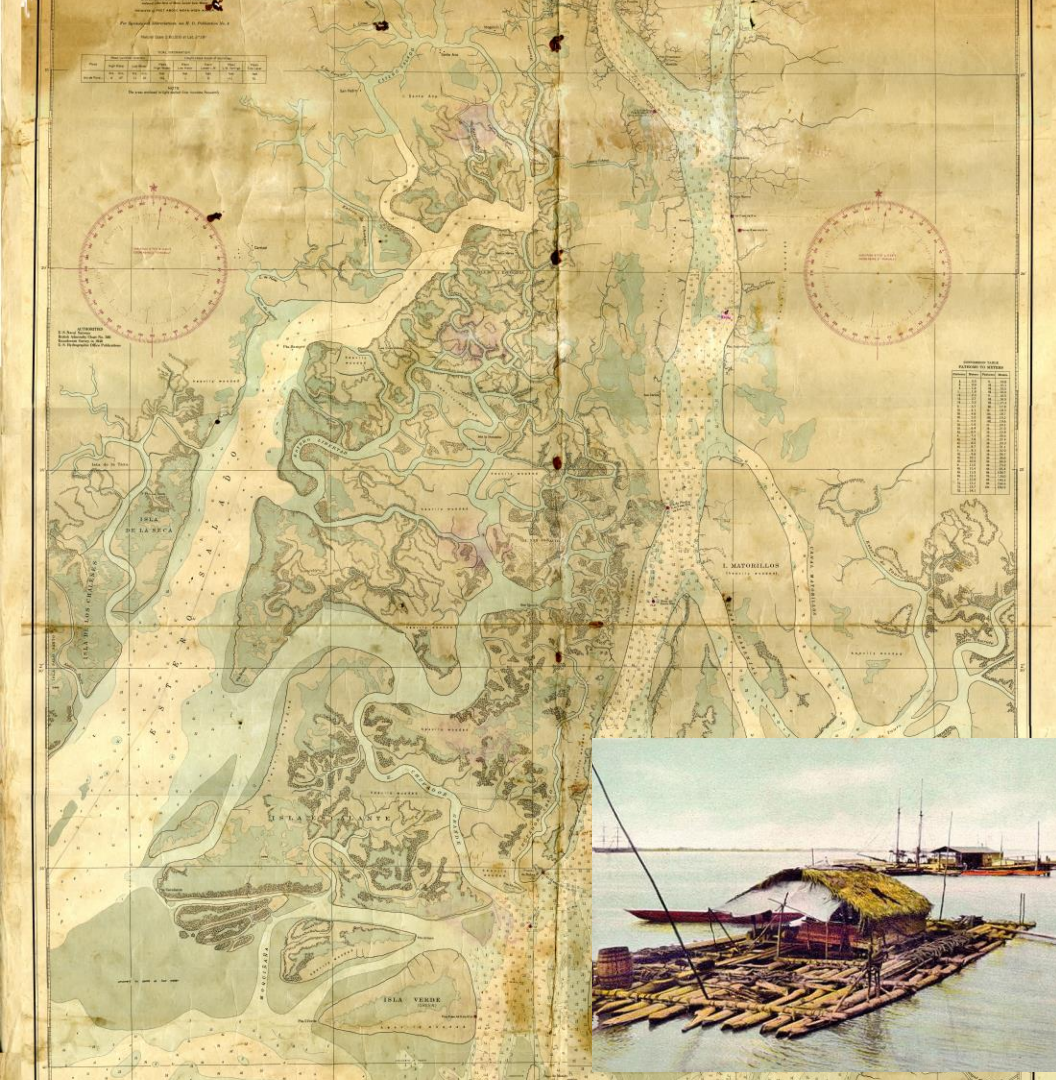


<https://www.ccondem.org.ec>

SUSTAINABLE USE AND CUSTODY AGREEMENTS (SUCAs)

- Requirements:
 - Formalized fisheries association
 - Legal representation
 - Technical assistance (NGO) and management plan

- Gains: Exclusive rights to access area and resources (self-monitored)



GULF OF GUAYAQUIL – A long history of mangrove resource extraction

- Since pre-colonial times
- During colonial times, forced labour for mangrove logging
- Fisheries
- Late 1960s – shrimp farming, favoured first permanent settlements in the area



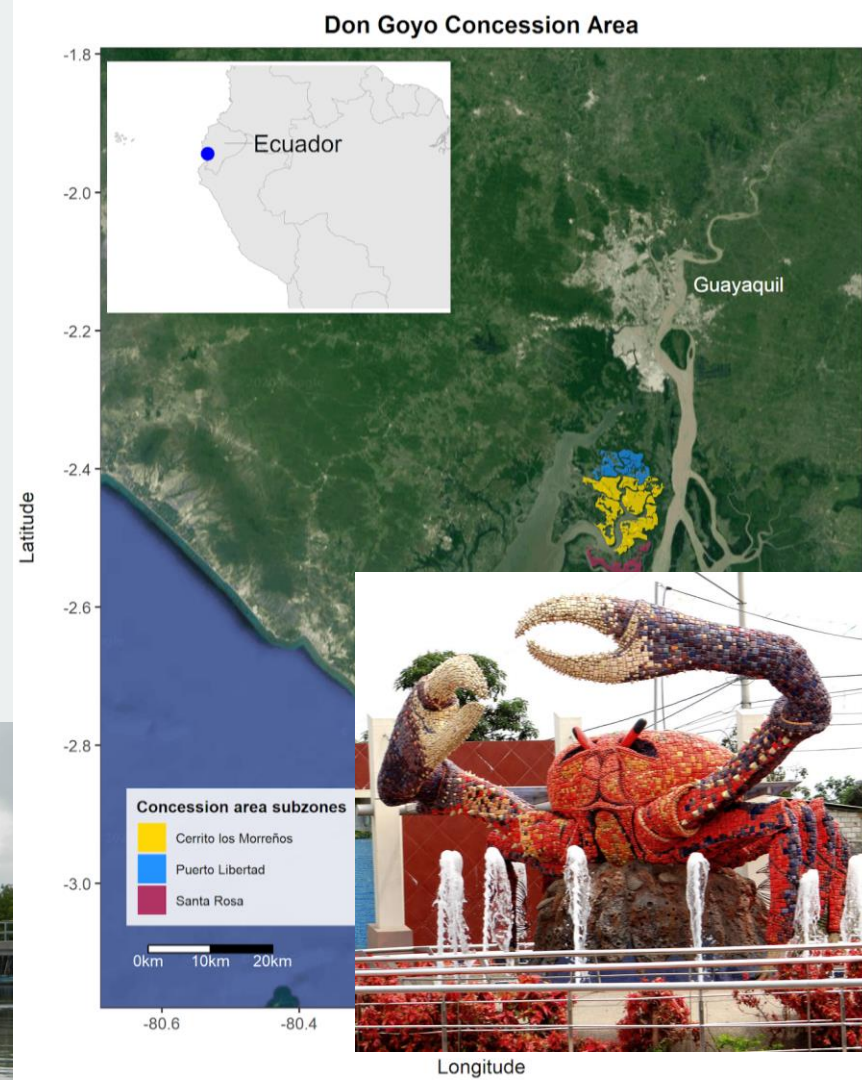
DON GOYO SUCA

Gulf of Guayaquil

- Since 2000, settlements of ~ 2 000 people, at the time of research largest mangrove concession in Ecuador
- Remote, lacking essential services
- Downstream from Guayaquil, the biggest port city of Ecuador
- Main actors: communities, NGOs, fisher associations, universities and research institutes, volunteering work, “invaders/independents”



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METHODS

- Fieldwork June-Sept 2019
- Focus groups and workshops, formal and informal interviews, coding
- Literature review
- Participant observation
- Stakeholders engaged: local fishermen (crabbers, fishers...), women, NGO workers, Ministry of Env., researchers.

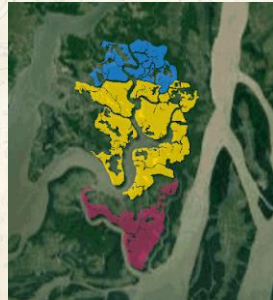


FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

- Long-lasting socioenvironmental conflict, not been able to protect mangrove or empower communities
- Loss of livelihood alternatives throughout time
- Concession area becomes a source of conflict, exclusion, and power
 - Upholding borders against “independents”
 - Internal tensions across different communities
 - Tensions within the communities

DECONSTRUCTING THE CONCESSION

- Conflicts and tensions arise from **how** the concession was built:
 - Resource management policies with resource extraction as the final goal
 - Based on a reduced and narrow definition of ancestry
- Spatiotemporal fixing (Harvey 2001): A geographical and socioenvironmental mismatch
 - Land-bias
 - Highly mobile resources
 - Mobile people and relations



Ancestrality becomes
for some a mode of access



ANCESTRALITY IN ACTION ... UNDER EXTRACTIVIST RULES

- Laws and regulations play crystalizing role (Grammond 2009), in this case of crabbing as an indicator of ancestry (even though history shows us otherwise)
- Disconnect between SUCA and communities
- Issues that Don Goyo inhabitants have to contend with are **exogenous** to the concession (poverty, pollution, resource scarcity, climate change, market prices)
- Wider conversation about power and strategic essentialisms (Whitten 2003, Escárcega 2010, Barker 2011, Pande 2017)

Do we keep pushing for policies that position marginalized, impoverished communities as “custodians” of public goods while receiving little to no support from the State and being trapped in resource extraction conflicts?

CONCLUSIONS

In coming years, mangrove management will become increasingly critical in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies.

We **support** the continuation of ancestral communities having access to their land and resources

We draw from history and critical perspectives to understand the current conflicts, and encourage policy makers and other actors to contend with extractivist origin of SUCAs and **amend** them to include democratic representation of the variety of ancestral experience, and focus on supporting community well-being and livelihood beyond what is profitable for external actors.

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THANK YOU!

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