

# When miners become “foreigners”: Competing categorizations within gold mining spaces in Guinea

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing on ethnographic research and problem-centered interviews in Guinean mining areas, this paper presents a comparative reading of the conflicting conceptions of what constitutes a “mining community.” First, I explore how independent artisanal miners describe and identify their activity. The weight of autochthony conventions is discussed concerning their insertion both in the mining fields and in their living locations. Second, I focus the case study on how the corporate social responsibility (CSR) interventions toward the mining community, commissioned by a gold mining company in Guinea, are interpreted by the artisanal miners. The analysis of the deployed discourses and related interventions delineate what is defined as the mining community in CSR programs, and how these interventions shape new understandings of the company’s territory among the miners.

Using a boundary work approach, the paper shows how CSR interventions symbolically transpose the spatial concession border into symbolic and social boundaries among the artisanal mineworkers. CSR discourses and interventions transform “trespassers” into “foreigners”, as opposed to “natives”, who are often viewed as “traditional sedentary workers” by the mining company. In doing this, CSR programs reinforce and standardize autochthony-based relations, and extend autochthony boundaries in all segments of the gold mining socio-technical system. The attachment of these initially separated categories creates an idealized figure of “traditional” artisanal mining, while also stigmatizing the itinerant artisanal miners. As a consequence, I will discuss the emergence of conflict situations regarding access to mining spaces and resources within the surrounding villages.

## Keywords:

Guinea, Artisanal and small scale mining (ASM), Corporate social responsibility, Mobility, Autochthony

## Introduction

First in November 2008 and again in the beginning of 2009, 13 and 23 people, respectively, died in two shaft collapses in artisanal mining fields in upper Guinea. These dramatic accidents echoed strongly in the local media, as well as areas much further away than the region where they occurred. While more than 200 people die every year in the same area in similar shafts’ downfalls, these incidents are not reported, nor are they published in the media (Bolay, 2013). Although these kinds of accidents regularly happen, they usually do not involve as many people. In this respect, the mentioned fatalities were striking because they occurred on the concession area of one of the main gold mining companies established in Guinea, and involved significant numbers of fatalities in single collapses. The consequences are wide-ranging, but in the case of the company, it suddenly highlighted the question of its “responsibility” toward neighboring collectivities, especially the active, independent, artisanal gold diggers, most of

whom are temporary workers. The answer given was quick, clear, and easy to formulate: yes, the accidents had taken place in the concession area of the company, but no, they were not the company’s responsibility, as the injured and casualties were trespassers who had no right to be there at that moment. Unsurprisingly, all press releases used the same words to qualify the casualties: “illegal gold diggers coming from abroad”.<sup>1</sup> This observation, thus, removed any responsibility for the company and hinted that the blame lay with a specific group designated as foreigners.

## Who competes for what?

The question of the relations between mining industries and the neighboring collectivities, especially where artisanal and small-scale mining<sup>2</sup> (ASM) is also practiced, is usually seen as

<sup>1</sup> Guinée Presse (May 8, 2009), Agence France Presse (November 13, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Artisanal and small-scale mining* (ASM) refers to informal mining activities carried out using low technology or minimum machinery (Hentschel et al. 2002).

problematic through the lens of competitors for the same resources. However, it has been shown that independent artisanal miners and large-scale multinational mining companies do not necessarily compete for the same gold (Hilson, 2011). The artisanal miners are technically constrained to limit their digging to surface reefs or alluvial placers, while mining companies extract the ore from deep reefs in large quantities (Hilson and Yakovleva, 2007: 102; USAID, 2005: 3). Practically, even the so-called “trespassers” hardly ever dig in active company mining areas, the access to which is often tightly guarded and controlled by the military. How, then, can we understand the narrative concerning the relations between the two, and its construction around the opposition between “legal owners”, on the one hand, and “illegal robbers”, on the other? The introductory example offers a way to perceive the question from a different angle. The material property of the gold obviously does not matter that much to the mining company, as artisanal gold diggers mostly extract and wash old ore from abandoned pits. Instead, property that is located in a certain territory implies legal responsibilities, the need for justification, and an unsought public visibility of what happens within this territory. How, then, do mining companies discursively and practically manage the territorial control of their concession area when the surrounding collectivities live, work, and often die around, and sometimes within, this same area? How do corporate social responsibility (CSR) discourses and practices deployed by the companies toward the mining community contribute to this form of governance? In addition, which are the consequences of the categorizations of people and space among the artisanal miners (i. e., local residents, itinerant miners, and part-time workers)? The paper aims to answer these questions by examining the kinds of symbolic, social, and spatial boundaries at stake in the relations among the artisanal miners and between the artisanal miners and a mining company.

Interactions between mining companies and the surrounding populations are often conflictive in many countries of the South. These interactions have been widely documented in the context of the role and potential for mediation in conflict mitigation (Andrew, 2003; MMSD, 2002 Chaps. 7 and 9), as well as in focusing on issues of competing land tenure both from an institutional perspective (i.e. Dreschler, 2001; Fisher, 2007) and through actor-based approaches (i.e. Hilson et al. (2007)). Those accounts share the following findings: (1) artisanal miners are usually labeled as “illegal” in these conflictive contexts; and (2) competing conceptions of land tenure and issues of formalization are often highlighted as the core reasons of their labelling as “illegal”. As Fischer (2007: 739) states, both of these findings are interrelated, and the difficulties in entering the licensing system play key roles in the criminalization of artisanal miners. They also have in common that conflict is usually conceived as bipartite between a company, on the one hand, and the ASM community, on the other. Yet despite its common use, the notion of the “mining community” in ASM is rarely detailed in view of its internal dynamics of identification; moreover, when a supplementary actor, such as a mining company, is implied in the social fabric.

In Guinea, mining activities are transient for most workers. Compared to other studies conducted in surrounding areas (e.g. Cartier and Bürge (2011), Keita (2001), Maconachie (2011)), most people engaged in ASM combine it with other activities, such as agriculture or, eventually, trade. Consequently, they do not necessarily identify as miners. Moreover, the intrinsically mobile dimension of artisanal mining for many workers suggests that identifications based on territoriality are less relevant in these contexts (Bryceson and Jonsson, 2010). While the idea of a mining community relying on “the myth of the isolated mining camp” has been challenged by empirical attention paid to the socio-technical system underlying the production of gold (Pfaffenberger, 1998:

291), it often remains taken for granted as an analytical unit in most CSR plans. The assumption of a bounded, homogenous mining community is, hence, problematic, as CSR strategies may finally result in supplementary social fragmentation at the local level when local dynamics of group identifications and access to resources are not considered. Therefore, it appeals to a better understanding of the processes of identification and categorization at stake among resident and mobile, transient and long-term, “newbies” and experienced gold diggers, particularly in the context of their relations with mining companies.

Some authors have shown that specific conventions were, indeed, regulating the experiences of individuals across a single mining camp and, hence, contributing to the emergence of a “mining culture” (Godoy, 1985; Werthmann 2010; Werthmann and Grätz, 2012). Grätz (2009), for example, illustrates how consumption practices, friendship ties, and rules of behavior structure the relations among miners in Benin and Mali. Also, Werthmann (2010) proposes the concept of heterotopia to understand the lives of miners in Burkina Faso, as they tend to invert the common values in other social fields, which contributes to enhancing the differences between non-miners and provides a sense of belonging among them. Concerning the mobile dimension of artisanal mining and its role in the process of identification, two strands of questions can be identified. The first concerns how being “on the move” changes the way people define themselves, as well as how they are perceived. As Klute and Hahn (2007:13) explain, practices of mobility contribute to the emergence of cultures of migration that can be understood through the experiences and discourses of the people involved in it. In a recent study, Jonsson and Bryceson (2009) show that a high level of mobility influences the career of artisanal mine workers, which provokes changes in their traditional attachments to their place of origin, and self-definitions. They empirically prove that miners are increasingly judged by their qualifications and competence, instead of their places of origin and tribal or ethnic affiliations. Hence, ethnicity, origin, and other forms of autochthony would not be very relevant in mining social spaces. Second, questions have also focused on the relations between mobile people and host communities (e.g. Grätz (2004), Werthmann (2000)). On the contrary, it seems in these cases that autochthony conventions are central to accessing social and material resources. However, most studies agree that belonging is fluid and can constantly be negotiated. In the case of artisanal mining, belonging to local structures is often a way to access landownership, control shafts, or claim compensations when private companies are involved.

While relations are said to “cross-cut ethnic or tribal group boundaries” among the miners (Godoy, 1985: 207), autochthony claims paradoxically appear to be central for the miners in accessing social and material resources. Drawing the boundaries of a mining community from the inside, hence, suggests first understanding how and when identities are shifting. It also encourages identifying the salient landmarks for belonging in specific contexts. By using case study material where the relations between resident and mobile workers also imply the existence of a third stakeholder (i.e., the mining company), the aim of this paper is twofold. First, it seeks to broaden understanding of the processes of identification and categorization among miners: mobile participant observation with a team of highly mobile gold miners illustrates how they relate, identify, categorize, and are categorized. Second, the paper explores the role of CSR programs in the social fabric of groups and identities when artisanal miners are dealing with the same or contiguous spaces, as an operating mining company. The underlying hypothesis of this paper is the following: rather than competing for gold in itself, artisanal mine workers are constantly struggling to belong to different groups that provide access to the needed social and material resources

in their search for gold. The boundaries of these groups are fluid and often contested. Autochthonic forms of belonging, rather, provide access to resources in the living sphere of the villages and surrounding mining camps, while professional recognition provides access to the hotspots in the artisanal mining fields of gold extraction. As CSR programs explicitly aim at connecting to the mining community, their first impediment is to define the community they want to reach. Following Sharp (2006), the aim of the paper is not to evaluate whether programs are effective or not; rather, the intention is to understand what they produce in specific contexts that comparably exist in other mining areas in the South. Hence, the task is to define who is identified as being a member of this mining community, and how the boundaries between the outsiders and the insiders are produced, reproduced, and marked, as well as which are the consequences among the miners.

### Mining spaces and mobility in western Africa

History has shown that labor migrations in Africa have been present to such an extent that the entire continent has often been stereotyped as “the continent of migrations” (van Dijk et al., 2001). In addition to the economic and political contexts that have changed, patterns of migrations have evolved, which demands to situate the current experiences of mobile mine workers in these specific settings of *travels and encounters* (Klute and Hahn, 2007).

#### *Mobile and resident miners*

In the past, all of West Africa was seen as an economic unit where people were moving freely, albeit mostly for trade or in search of new land for farming. In the case of mining, the region of Bouré, where the study took place, was already a common venue for populations of northern arid areas during the dry season at the time of the Malian Empire. Between the XII and XVI centuries, the Empire held exclusive property rights on the gold nuggets and was already relying on a seasonal workforce. The activity was exclusively conducted during the dry season and was strictly dependent on the agricultural calendar (Ki-Zerbo and Niane, 1991: 195). In general, entire villages or families were leaving their places of origin for temporary settlements, some of which became villages (Herbert, 2012: 26–28). These displacements institutionalized in circular and seasonal movements during pre-colonial times and participated in what Dummett (2012) refers to as a *mining frontier*. Contrary to more recently discovered gold deposits, the region of Bouré has historically developed mainly upon gold mining and the numerous waves of “transitory” migrants. Those were traditionally hosted through the institution of *tutorat*: a customary convention that gives its beneficiaries a grant on land tenure rights at the price of continuing gratitude and allegiance toward the owner (Chauveau, 2007: 66). This usually consists in transferring part of the agricultural revenues to the *tuteur*. Currently, migration narratives play an important role in shaping the identities of the local populations through the claims on land by reference to the “first settlers”. During colonial times, migration patterns to the mines changed in their composition. They shifted to an almost exclusively male labor force employed by colonial capitalists in mechanized industrial mines. However, in the artisanal mining sector, farmers-miners continued maintaining regular contacts with artisanal mining settlements where they had established prerogatives, in particular through *tutorat* relations. These dynamics have had visible impacts on the current social organization, such as common multi-local households, but they have also experienced major changes that I will outline here.

Unemployed people often fuel urban-rural migrations (Beauchemin and Bocquier, 2004: 2253) or “return” migrations, even if they have never resided in their “place of origin” before (Potts, 1995). Unemployment in the urban centers is, hence, a major cause of engagement in the ASM sector (Hilson and Potter, 2005). Now, in the margins of traditional circular migrations linked to seasonal agriculture, new forms of long-term mobility have emerged. Better access to communication as well as small mechanization makes it possible to identify hotspots and to avoid flooding during the rainy season (Nyame et al., 2009: 10). Thus, in the tradition of long-standing circular movements, an increasing number of people engage in full-time artisanal gold mining by adopting a mobile way of life that allows them to move quickly from one mining field to another without any intention to settle (Jonsson and Bryceson, 2009). Due to the increasing amount of itinerant miners, encounters between local populations and temporary workers are increasingly seen as potentially conflictive, at least during the first phase of settlement (Grätz, 2003: 140).

#### *Miners and mining companies*

In parallel, the second form of encounter with which this paper is concerned is related to multinational companies and their relations with the surrounding populations, composed both of local residents and temporary artisanal miners. Since the 1980s, these relations have become increasingly formalized through CSR programs. According to Carroll (1999), the shift from mutual avoidance to a sustained and organized involvement towards the surrounding collectivities is due to the increasing critique of NGOs and international institutions, who reproach the mining companies for the environmental and social damages they generate. Critiques of CSR have emerged, many drawing attention to the few effects of the undertaken measures compared to the benefits in legitimating the presence of extractive, multinational companies in developing countries (for a synthesis, see Banerjee (2008)). In the mineral extraction sector, some new arguments are being given to mobilize companies more concretely in the areas of environmentally and socially sustainable production, such as minimizing the costs generated by conflicts with surrounding communities (Davis and Franks, 2011). The recommendations from the International Council on *Mining and Metals* (ICMM), for example, also contribute to spreading new forms of integrated productive development in the mining sector by insisting on direct benefits in terms of “local governance” (ICMM, 2010).

As powerful entities, mining companies affect how the people with whom they intend to interact define themselves. On the one hand, CSR programs often imply supplementary access to material resources and a specific audience. By formally identifying beneficiaries, these programs may generate social fragmentation, such as in a case mentioned by Frynas (2005: 592), in which villagers attacked their neighbors who had been elected for CSR investments. The injunction for mining companies to interact with specific “communities” produces standardized terms to define the customary environment and the stakeholders with whom they interact. For instance, Luning (2012) highlights the consequences of the settlement of a junior exploration mining company in Burkina Faso in terms of autochthony claims, which shape the relations both with the company and within the population. The author identifies the concerns of the population—first to benefit from the company's settlement and second to define who should be considered as a benefactor. In this case, autochthony is either up- or downscaled, depending on the type of demand. On the other hand, local communities are not passive victims of multinational mining companies, and use discourses on development and customary land tenure to benefit from compensations and CSR investments (Filer and Macintyre, 2006; Jorgensen, 2004). In such

instances, autochthony claims in extractive contexts appear to be highly constructed and situated. “Customary land” or “landowner” status are strategically constructed for the mining companies or the state and mobilized in order to obtain access to compensation funds first, and second to benefice quota-share through the mine ministry. Consequently, those categories are also excluding and participating in the standardization of boundaries in the local population.

After presenting the methodology and outlining the theoretical underpinnings, the case study is described by according particular attention to the traditional conventions that host communities use to regulate the presence and work of artisanal gold miners from different locations and social backgrounds. Next, I define typical identifications among the miners in the working sphere and the living sphere, and their strategies for shifting identities to access resources. Then, the deployment of CSR programs is presented in three successive steps of the categorization of “space” and their effects in defining a “community”. Finally, consequences of those categorizations among the miners are discussed, particularly those concerning the resurgence of autochthony claims in the working sphere.

### Methodology and theoretical standpoints

The field research was conducted over a combined nine months in gold mining areas in Upper Guinea between 2009 and 2012, more specifically in the region of Bouré, where the Société Aurifère de Guinée (S.A.G. AngloGold Ashanti) is located. Diverse anthropological methods were combined, and several stakeholders’ perspectives were taken into consideration. The first objective aimed at capturing and comparing the strategies used to obtain access to mining resources of itinerant and resident mineworkers in different locations, especially regarding how they constructed their affiliations to “groups”. I first stayed for three months in two households of miners and followed their day-to-day activities in the neighboring mining fields. Those insights were supplemented by findings from 26 interviews with resident and itinerant miners, of whom 24 were males. The women interviewed will not be considered here because of the singularity of their experiences *vis-à-vis* the other male interviewees. The interviews mostly touched on their experiences of mobility and strategies of insertion in the artisanal mines, as well as on the social conventions regulating their insertion. Mobile ethnography with a group of itinerant artisanal gold miners was done in several mining fields between southern Mali and the region of Bouré, in Guinea. Complementary interviews were conducted with *tom bolomas*<sup>3</sup> and local state officials in order to obtain their views on the relations among the miners as well as between the miners and the mining company. Because of the “tripartite” context with which this paper is concerned, informal discussions were also held with other local stakeholders, such as villages’ authorities and employees of the S. A.G. I also collected copies of police statements for casualties in the area of Bouré through local informants and reviewed public relations and official statements of the S.A.G. to capture its official position regarding the mining community. Hence, following Barry (2013: 17), I aim to distinguish the objects of dispute that are made public from the ones that are not.

The perspective of the artisanal miners is obviously more valued, as the main question of this paper is to understand how they identify and draw lines of belonging in different and changing contexts, especially in view of the presence of CSR programs in artisanal mining spaces. Besides, the context of the study did not

allow for access to mining executives, which practically limits the possibility of obtaining their view on the deployment of CSR programs and how they conceive the mining community.

The analysis of the material has been driven by a boundary work approach. I rely on Jenkins’ definition of the identification process, which is conceptualized as the result of a struggle between external categorization and internal definition in an interactive relation (Jenkins, 2011: 81). Social identities are strongly influenced by external categorizations, but they do not necessarily reflect a constant isomorphism between the nominal dimensions of social identity (i.e., “the artisanal miners”, “the villagers”, “the foreigners”, and “the trespassers”) and the virtual dimension of social identity (e.g., how people define themselves in a specific context, to which group they define their belonging). Yet categorizations may – to some extent – be internalized by the categorized groups. As Lamont and Molnár (2002: 168) suggest, boundaries between in-group and out-group can be symbolic or social and, as such, regulate the passage from discursive categorization to effective access or limitation to specific resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities. Thus, taking current emic identifications as a starting point, the paper then searches to better understand the role of CSR in the formation of categories among the gold diggers and, through this, in organizing access to the needed resources for the extraction of gold, such as access to specific areas.

### The case study: The region of Bouré and the S.A.G.

The region of Bouré, around 30 km west of Siguiiri, is abundant in gold resources and has been a common venue for gold diggers for centuries (Niane, 1975). Artisanal gold extraction is a long-established source of income for the living population, and it has become particularly important during the last 10 years with the spike in the gold price, either by direct involvement in the artisanal extraction of gold or through the numerous related activities, such as trade, transport, foundries, and housing. In 1989, a large part of the territory of Bouré was allocated to industrial gold mining and became the first concession for large-scale gold mining in Guinea. The relations between the company and its surroundings were formally non-existing or essentially conceived in a mode of defense through the military protection of the leases’ limits (Soumah, 2010). First called Société Aurifère de Guinée (Ashanti Goldfields Corporation), the mining company merged with AngloGold in 2004 and became part of AngloGold Ashanti Ltd. and remained known as the S.A.G. in the region. In 2004, the construction of the processing plant implied the resettlement of two villages. Currently, five villages are directly concerned with the activities of the mining industry because of their location on the lease’s borders. Since then, the relations with the population of Siguiiri and the neighboring villages of Bouré have often turned conflictive and resulted in frequent strikes by local employees and protests by the population of Siguiiri, among whom many are part-time or seasonal artisanal mine workers.

Diverse profiles characterize the neighboring population regarding their role and engagement in ASM, but the study is interested in the people involved in artisanal mining activities in the direct environment adjoining the concession limits of the company. These can be ideally presented as three specific types.

- Some people engage in long-term itinerancies that sometimes last several years, which imply cutting off most family ties and returning when they have acquired recognition in the sector as well as the sufficient savings to start a life of their own. Those often refer to mining as a form of “adventure,” which is

<sup>3</sup> *Tom boloma* are local militia regulating work in the artisanal mining fields.

a common figure in migration narratives in western Africa (Bredeloup, 2008).

- Second are those who engage seasonally or temporarily, usually within household livelihood strategies, and consider mining as a complement to their main activity, which is mainly farming.
- Finally, local residents of mining areas usually depend exclusively on gold mining activities, most often indirectly. They typically combine several activities related to gold mining, except that they participate directly in the extraction process. They invest in mining activities by securing a shaft, providing small mechanical support, or conducting business out of gold or in services in the mining camps (e.g., opening up small restaurants or coffee shops or selling clothes or extraction materials). Their autochthonous status, besides owning a shaft, also allows them to be considered as part of the local militia.

So-called “natives” claim their local anchorage to the land of the villages and have traditionally regulated the presence of other gold diggers through the institution of *tutorat*. In particular, seasonal workers are usually hosted by local residents, either through the institution of *tutorat* or by mobilizing family ties, and they usually maintain strong links from year to year. On the contrary, itinerant gold miners are more prone to settle in temporary mining camps close to the artisanal mining fields. The camps can host up to several thousands of people during the dry season and become dense places of trade and business for the entire region (see Mbodj (2009)). Temporary workers build their tents upon arrival and usually concentrate in specific areas, which are dependent on their provenance and language, in such a way that different “neighborhoods” host the “Mossi”, the “Malian”, or the “Djoula”, and so on. Those lines are even more accentuated in cases where many people from single villages have come together by sharing costs of transportation and settle in together.

On their side, villages’ authorities manage their own territories by allocating plots for artisanal mining, for which they collect taxes directly from the artisanal mineworkers. A local militia – called *tom boloma* – composed of local gold diggers, is in charge of allocating the plots, regulating conflicts among the gold diggers, and collecting levies. While ethnic and local belonging usually regulates the living sphere, the working sphere does not rely on the same identification landmarks, especially with the extension of mobility practices in the field of ASM, a register for identification based on professional skills that organizes the relations among the artisanal workers. However, both social fields of the working and the living spheres are intimately related. From the company perspective, its commitment requires defining beneficiaries and interlocutors for its interventions. The next sections will show how, when, and to what group artisanal miners identify in the contexts of the mining camp and the mining field as well as how they interpret and are affected by CSR programs.

### **Identifications, positions, and values among artisanal mineworkers: The camp and the *faro*<sup>4</sup> as spaces regulated by autochthony and mobility**

Despite its administrative informality, the ASM socio-technical system is well structured around specific positions, skills, and core values that workers learn and mobilize to evolve in their mining career. The ASM sector is intimately related to soil property and strongly structured by autochthony relations. As Lentz (2003:113)

<sup>4</sup> People refer to the “faro” as the mining field in activity. “Faro” is also the principal deity in Mandinka cosmogony. It is a dual principle that rules the sky and the water (and all minerals that can be found in the subsoil). By extension, it is also used to design the mining field whose gold is ruled by “Faro.”

explains, the notion of autochthony refers to the “original belonging to a group or territory, whose boundary between autochthons and allochthons is used in particular as an argumentative resource to define political rights and to justify privileged access of autochthons to economic resources”. In Guinea (as well as in most Mandinka contexts), autochthony conventions find a transposition in a division of labor between underground and surface work. As shaft owners need to be considered natives of the place by the local militia, they usually are “sedentary” at the given moment of digging the main shaft with other local residents. Then, galleries’ digging and ore extraction are done by the *kalayantigilu*,<sup>5</sup> who are usually itinerant independent gold diggers exchanging their workforce and experience from shaft to shaft for a predefined amount of rough ore. These individuals can also be locals who have extensive experience in the artisanal mines, often in several regions, and earn better incomes by working in the tunnels, rather than on the surface. As miners like to say, “There are only two ways to get gold: either you go where it is, or you just pray that it gets found in your home place”. Practically, this saying means that when some successful enterprises earn a valuable reputation among artisanal miners, it is not only the *kalayantiglu* from any region who come to test their luck in the shafts, but all non-resident relatives come back to the village and claim their autochthonous right to manage a shaft. As Hilgers (2011: 42) stresses, “the social effectiveness of the principle of autochthony depends on the hierarchy it establishes within a given space of relationships...The degree of autochthony is defined and attributed according to the position that each group occupies in the common space”. Thus, autochthony functions as an organizational principle of social life based on binary oppositions between autochthons and allochthons. However, autochthony varies in degrees: non-resident natives, for instance, may access some privileged positions, but they will not be considered as autochthon as the resident natives.

*Kalayantigilu* usually identify by symbolically opposing to the villagers, which is affirmed by statements such as *paying one's food, instead of cultivating it or working a pick, instead of a hoe*. To be sure, the *kalayantigilu* value their experiences working in the mines throughout Africa as opposed to the local residents, whose knowledge is more concerned with agriculture. Moreover, they stress a form of cosmopolitanism, which they experience through their networks of peers; this strongly contradicts with local practices that are essentially based upon close networks of relatives.

In this particular case, all artisanal mining fields are adjoining the area of the company's lease, which is often subject to incursions of gold diggers either operating in small groups at night or in large numbers, such as in the cases of strikes and protests. According to the company's official statements, those should be mainly attributed to “foreigners mainly coming from abroad” (Anglogold Ashanti, 2009). Because categorizing notions, such as “locals” and “foreigners”, have specific meanings and consequences in the field of artisanal gold mining, I will first examine how they are experienced in spaces where itinerant, seasonal, and resident workers meet: the working sphere of the artisanal mining field and the living sphere of the camps.

*The faro: “There is no foreigners”*

After examining ethnographic field data and problem-centered interviews, an ideal model of the identification scheme among workers can be proposed around the three most salient axes that

<sup>5</sup> Etymologically, “kalayantigi” means the “one who holds the long stick”, which is used for excavation in the galleries. By extension, it also refers to the mobile way of life in which most of these workers are engaged.

they mobilize: technical knowledge, “courage”, and the experience of mobility. Topics such as *the necessary resources to evolve within the mining sector* or *how workers self-identify* have highlighted that these core resources are similar in mining spaces spread within the Mandinka-speaking area without regard to nationality or ethnicity. The acquisition of these necessary skills for recognition mostly transits through a highly mobile way of life and forms the value of a gold digger. A short summary of Kalil's trajectory in the mines may illustrate this scheme better.

Like many unemployed youths, despite vocational training, Kalil left home first for the neighboring mining fields during the exploitation period of the dry season. During this first experience in working in the mining fields, the many stories he heard from other workers who had traveled in search of gold influenced his decision to go abroad, too. His first journey lasted three years and led him to Nigeria through several other countries and mining contexts. The role of mobility in his “curricula” is summarized as such: “I felt I had to leave elsewhere if I wanted to learn. My first master, himself, had been away in Mali and Burkina for long and got many secrets from outside...If you don't travel, you will only know your soil – only one gold – but there are many different. Now, even the shafts where no one can go inside—me, I can. If you haven't done like me, you will fear. Have you seen? They called me here for the big ones [deep shafts] because they cannot go down”.

Technical knowledge and “courage” are, hence, perceived as the most valuable qualities for recognition and thought to be acquired by the experience of mobility. The three structuring axes are briefly summarized below.

#### Technical knowledge

*Kalayantigilu* working in the underground need to acquire very specific knowledge of the physical environment in order to find the right places to dig, to make accurate decisions regarding their prospects, and to avoid accidents. Long-term experiences in several places as well as the apprenticeship with a master form the most recognized signs of technical knowledge. These skills, therefore, are always highlighted when arriving at a new mining field. Itinerant miners like to boast about their previous experiences, their discoveries, and their successes when they arrive on a new mining field as well as in everyday life discussions. Technical knowledge is usually linked to *maraboutage* and the learning of the right verses to address the “Faro”.

#### “Courage”

Working in the artisanal mines is a perilous activity often subject to accidents due to shafts and galleries' collapses. Gallery workers are the most exposed to these risks, and they are pressed to spend long periods in the underground tunnels. They often have acquired *maraboutage* skills, such as specific verses for protection or luck. Typical discussions in the coffee shops or self-presentation at the moment of arriving in a new mining field systematically include some exploits in dangerous situations. “I am still here”, “I am protected”, and “I know how to deal with the soil” conclude the stories and aim at proving the courage and competencies of the miners in perilous situations.

#### Mobility

The typical motto among itinerant mine workers is that “one must be where the gold comes out”. This implies the ability to maintain an extremely mobile way of life and to acquire the necessary mobility skills. As heard in many discussions in upper Guinea, local residents were affirming that they had some great masters at their specific locations but that they had not gone out, which was their main limitation for social recognition among their peers from the outside. Ibrahima put it like this: “The more you move, the more you can compare

and learn. Not only about the shafts, but also about people and how to relate....There are things you wouldn't do in your home place but that you have to in the mines”. Moreover, gold is not perceived by the gold diggers as a static item that should only be discovered; rather, it is perceived as a mobile one that can appear or disappear, depending on the intervention of djinns (Cuello, 2005: 171). Being mobile is, thus, seen as a necessary condition for many artisanal mine workers, but it is also the most recognized way to acquire experience and prove one's courage.

Hence, effective categorizations in the working sphere do not make ethnic or national affiliations salient. On the contrary, the local populations admit that mobile workers bring experience and knowhow with them that the local population often does not have and cannot afford to obtain. By being associated with a form of nomadism, the *kalayantigilu* are not limited to their “allochthonous” status, and, on their behalf, they insist greatly that their mobile way of life provides expertise in terms of knowledge (e.g. finding rich ore) and competencies (e.g. extracting ore even in unstable shafts). Local residents who largely depend on their skills also recognize their integration in the extraction process. As one of the local leaders explained in an interview, “People can work hard here, but we have no great masters. Very few have traveled out, so even if we know our place, we depend a lot on other *kalayantigilu*”. In the idealistic conception affirmed by the *tom bolomas* in most mining fields, “there are no foreigners—we are all here to work, and the gold is for everyone”. In practice, the idea of equal access to gold is transposed into the sharing system of incomes, in which there are no salaries but, rather, a division of the extracted ore. At the stage of washing the ore, all workers have the same chances of income, based on the amount of gold in the ore and not on their origin or status in the team. At the symbolical level, responsibilities are also shared; for example, while local earth priests are in charge of conducting rituals for the opening of new plots, itinerant *kalayantigilu* are designated to recite propitious verses inside the tunnels. These powerful narratives strengthen the professional identification while removing other boundaries based on locality, ethnicity, nationality, or kinship.

#### *The camp and the village: Different degrees of autochthony*

Contrary to the *faro*, mining camps are structured mostly around local, national, and ethnic affiliations. People from the same region settle in the same area of the camp. Workers speaking the same language and coming from the same region usually start by building their tents where they find people with a common background, thus forming different neighborhoods. A newly arrived miner who set up his tent close to Kalil's own recalled his arrival to the camp: “If I haven't come to meet someone I know, I will try to find the people like me. Here, I have asked for the people from Mandiana, and I have met this guy at the coffee [shop]. He knew some people from my neighboring village, so I went to meet them first. They couldn't house me, but they have shown me where to build the tent nearby”. Thus, when it is about housing, “the people like me” refers to the local origin of the workers, rather than to specific positions in the socio-technical component of artisanal gold mining.

Because of the long-standing practice of *tutorat* in artisanal mining areas, villagers are used to hosting temporary workers in their family concessions, as long as there is room for them. The same principle applies to the mining camps, wherein newcomers first have to request permission from the village's representatives before settling their tents. According to villages' officials, the control that they maintain over the living sphere is also meant to ensure the long-term existence of the adjoining mining field, from which they receive significant income through the payment system of shafts. Indeed, several examples have shown that

**Table 1**  
Residential strategies of insertion in artisanal gold mining areas.

Long-term settling	Multilocality	Seasonal <i>tutorat</i>
From their initial settlement in the mining camps, some miners decide to settle for longer terms and negotiate to purchase a house in the village	From their initial settlement in the mining camps, some miners invest and build houses in different villages in mining areas from which they circulate to other mining fields	Some miners come every one or two years and build long-term friendship ties with the same <i>tuteur</i>
After some years, especially if they have married, they can gain access to some autochthonic prerogatives, such as owning a shaft or taking part in the local militia	Miners commuting through multilocal households can acquire access to some autochthonic prerogatives, like owning a shaft, but they will not be considered in the decisional process concerning the management of the village's mining fields	Seasonal miners who maintain strong ties with their <i>tuteur</i> benefit from obtaining first-hand information on the hotspots, and they can delegate the payment of a shaft to their <i>tuteur</i>

unresolved conflicts in the mining fields have often reverberated in the mining camps, sometimes contributing to the closure of the artisanal mine by state intervention.

Besides being the place where workers sleep and spend their free time, the camps are also the hotspots where workers can get information on the most promising shafts. The most frequently cited difficulty is finding the right place to work that is a shaft where the amount of gold in the ore is presumed to be important. Thus, relations with local residents, among whom many are shaft owners or gold buyers, are decisive and appeal to value local affiliations. This can be improved in three ways (see Table 1).

However, for most itinerant gold diggers, the first two options are either too costly or too binding, because of their needs for flexibility in their search for gold. For them, presentation of self is crucial, as it is the way to highlight one's *maraboutage* competencies, knowledge and experience, and overcome autochthonic boundaries by valuating their knowledge.

From a *boundary work* perspective, itinerant mineworkers mostly define themselves through their mobile way of life, experiences of risk taking, and common knowledge of the subsoil and its secrets (e.g. propitious and protection verses), as opposed to the sedentary shaft owners and other people working on the surface. These lines are equally shared between local residents and itinerant temporary workers, so that both may self-identify as *kalayantigi* within the mining sphere and through local attachments (family ties, lineage belonging) within the living sphere. These distinctions are situated in time and space, as shaft owners might be workers in different locations, and workers might be shaft owners in their own respective villages. Both related social fields of the *faro* and the camp, hence, rely on the following: mobility and experiences in the mining fields and autochthony in the villages and camps.

#### *Shifting identifications*

Nevertheless, this pattern of division of labor is flexible and can be overcome through the mobilization of one's reputation as a worker, as we have seen. Identities are claimed regarding specific issues, depending on the context: housing, getting access to shafts, joining a team, and selling gold. Justifications will, hence, change according to the context and the pursued goals, either emphasizing local attachments or work experience abroad. The experience of Kalil, with whom I travel, alongside his "team", is a good illustration of how itinerant mineworkers adapt to the local context according to the valued identifications in the living and working spheres.

When we first met in Guinea, Kalil had arranged to stay with his team in the house of a local dweller of the leading family of the place. Because of his allochthonous status, this was a way to gain access to several shafts by financing his *tuteur* to pay for the different shafts. When they reached the ore, Kalil allowed most of the family members of his *tuteur* to be on the team, without

regard to their experience, or lack thereof, in gold mining. This was perceived by the community as a sign of recognition of autochthony preference and, hence, respect toward the village's institutions.

One year later, we met again in an overcrowded Malian mining camp. At this point, Kalil had not found a local *tuteur* in the village, which was already fully occupied mostly by relatives of local residents attracted by the gold rush. He then had to stay in the mining camp together with other workers from his native region. His first move was to relate with a gold buyer of the village, with whom he spent his first days. Progressively, he began staying most of the day at his new friend's concession and quickly became the *petit mari* of his friend's sister.<sup>6</sup> Those local attachments with a local family quickly allowed him to manage the payment of several shafts through his friend in the neighboring mining field.

On the contrary, in the working sphere, Kalil composed his teams of people coming from many different countries and ethnic affiliations in Africa (Guinea, Mali, Niger, the Ivory Coast, and Nigeria). He explicitly aimed at mixing origins and experiences in order to attract other shaft owners to request his participation in their enterprises. Kalil conducted significant amounts of presentation talk to emphasize the "cosmopolitan" composition of the group, while valorizing local attachments in the living sphere.

Hence, depending on the context and objectives, Kalil will either emphasize his experience of gold mining throughout Africa or even capitalize on the experiences abroad of his other team members, or he will emphasize local attachments, sometimes explicitly invested to foster insertion in a new location. For instance, Kalil still owns a house in Liberia, where he was engaged episodically in artisanal gold mining a decade ago: "I don't know even if it still exists, but at the time, I was keeping it for anytime I was going there. People knew me, and though I was a foreigner to them, I had friends there, and I knew about what was happening in the mines. Now, it's good here and in Kangaba; I have not returned there since I got married". Thus, relations in the working context are not established on autochthony conventions but are rather organized within the broader framework of artisanal mining with no regard for local, national, or ethnic boundaries. Madou (also a member of the team) explains this clearly when he speaks about his years of travels in the mines: "Of course, it is hard to shift from one place to another. Sometimes, the police annoy you because you are Guinean (in Mali), or they want the documents. But in the *faro*, we all know this, as most of us have traveled out. Only your language can limit you. And even though I have also been working with the *mossi*... we speak by hands, and we know what we do. My master in Sierra Leone – he was a *kono*, and we were *maninka* and even *mossi* working with him. If it is for work, it doesn't matter – [it matters] only

<sup>6</sup> *Fudukuruni*, or "small marriage", is a common institution in artisanal mining spaces. It concerns women and men traveling without a husband or wife who ally for the time of gold exploitation in an artisanal mining field.

what you know about galleries and if you know how you can do it well—you can earn well, too”.

In the social field of artisanal mining, the apparent contradiction between local attachment and forms of “nomadism” is well accepted and seen as a necessity, from the perspectives of both the local resident and the temporary workers. But what do mining companies, then, consider as relevant when they define a mining community within which to conduct CSR programs? Who is labeled as “in” or “out”, and what are the consequences among the artisanal miners regarding their access to spaces and resources in the mining fields?

### **The mining community from a corporate social responsibility perspective: A Guinean case study**

As noted in the 2011 “Sustainable gold” report (AngloGold Ashanti, 2011), AngloGold Ashanti considers that CSR should allow it “to create a better understanding of the issues (it) faces and (its) goal of eliminating all VPSHR<sup>7</sup> allegations and incidents”. The analysis of the company’s documentation and the follow up of the relative undertaken interventions under the CSR label of “community development” make apparent two major concerns: one is the definition of the territory of the mine, and another is about the definition of the concerned mining community with whom they must interact. I present here three successive and complementary interventions of the mining company toward the artisanal miners acting in the surroundings of the concession’s lease. This work was delegated to a subsidiary consultancy office that already had contributed in the resettlement of a neighboring village in the past. First, these interventions participate in categorizing space. Second, they contribute in categorizing workers and their access to the different spaces.

#### *Re-defining the territory in three steps*

*Expulsion:* The common understanding of territory distribution usually follows the legal definition of the mining lease of the company. In short, territories are bounded and protected, and non-employees are excluded from the concession area. The symbolic representation of the “fortress” (Hönke, 2010) is reaffirmed by military control and expulsion, as well as occasionally the imprisonment of trespassers. Incursions into the concession lease take two forms—either small, organized groups of gold diggers operating at night or spontaneous movement involving all kinds of gold diggers during protests and strikes. After several strikes and incursions of large amounts of people, the company opted for a change of strategy in the control over the territory. A *tom boloma* who participated in the discussions with the consultancy group reported it as follows: “They know they will have to keep doing ‘rattissage’ as long as they do not let miners access the old spots. They cannot imprison everyone, and leaders in the villages have started complaining in Siguiri”. Facing the venue of numerous artisanal gold diggers who were assimilated by the company to “illegal artisanal miners mainly coming from outside the Siguiri area” (AngloGold Ashanti, 2010), it had become difficult to prevent the presence of gold diggers in the area of the concession. Consequently, more and more people were being arrested and deported in containers, which started to be criticized also by local elites as an obvious human right violation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.

<sup>8</sup> The local radio in Siguiri (Radio rurale locale de Siguiri) contributed greatly to the diffusion of these critiques regarding the practices of imprisonment.

#### *Tolerance*

After the 2009 accidents, AngloGold Ashanti decided to engage in a more collaborative process with the artisanal miners and redefine its controlled territory. Discussions started between the consultancy group, the villages’ authorities, and the *tom bolomas* comities, which resulted in a withdrawal of the securing patrols from the abandoned pits. This was more likely the result of an informal consensus than an official agreement on which local collectivities could legally rely. As a result of this shift in the control over the concession’s area, the leftover zones were secured neither by the company nor by the local militia. The local militia considered the new zones to be too dangerous because of their instability, which was caused by the use of dynamite and intensive drilling undertaken by the company. People could however access the spots without regulation, mostly to avoid paying taxes in the regulated artisanal mining field but also to take more risks regarding shaft collapses. The head of the *tom boloma* said in this respect: “Of course, it’s too dangerous. We often come here and tell them to get out of the shafts, but at the following day, they are back. We already have to manage the village’s plots and decide where people can dig or not, but there, it’s the S.A.G. We don’t take taxes there; it’s not for the village, so we cannot prevent their coming”. The leftover zones attract workers in the most vulnerable positions, be they local or temporary itinerant workers. It can be assumed that one of the direct benefits for the company is the non-recording of accidents occurring in the leftover zones. Fatalities drastically decreased in the 2010 annual report compared to the previous year (AngloGold Ashanti, 2010), while representatives of the local Red Cross state that they still mostly occur in the leftover zones and that they primarily concern people from the region.

*Interference:* A third type of encounter between the mining company and the artisanal gold miners can be identified through the implementation of CSR programs in the community. These programs (such as those regarding public awareness to environmental issues, investment in community relation improvement, and investment in health care) extend the scope of influence of the S.A.G. from the spaces of gold extraction to the neighboring villages and mining camps. Following the trend toward collaboration initiated in 2009, the company, for example, invested in electric infrastructure for the communities. At the beginning of consultancy, the question of who was the targeted community had to be answered. On the one hand, understanding the community as an equivalent for the village meant that it was necessary to put aside the miners’ principal problem, which was that most of the villagers were not local residents. On the other hand, focusing on the community of artisanal miners signified the importance of formally recognizing their presence and work in leftover areas that were legally still the company’s responsibility. This led to the formalized categorization I detail in the next section.

#### *Defining the mining community*

The 2009 consultancy study established the definition of artisanal miners groups as “two separate artisanal mining groups operating at Siguiri—the local, traditional *orpailleurs*<sup>9</sup> and the artisanal miners who come from outside the Siguiri area and, in most cases, are not Guinean. Specifically, [the report] highlighted the existing tension and conflict between these two groups who compete for the same mining sites” (AngloGold Ashanti, 2009). Further in the report, the so-called “traditional *orpailleurs*” are associated with regular artisanal mining in the villages’ placers, while, in opposition, “foreigners” are said to work “outside the traditional system...within the mine’s lease area” (AngloGold Ashanti, 2009). As discussed earlier, artisanal

<sup>9</sup> *Orpailleur* is a French term for a gold prospector.

mining is historically embedded in practices of mobility, which became standardized through the institution of the “tutorat,” multi-locality, and networks of peers going beyond the single mining field. The provided definition contributes to the identification of a legitimate community with whom to interact and, consequently, to the exclusion of non-native mine workers from the targeted group, despite the close relations that resident and itinerant miners had traditionally maintained between. From an initial definition of the “mining community,” which focused first on the criteria of being involved in ASM activities to be considered part of the mining community, the renewed definition adds a separating line between locals and foreigners. Through this, the report also discursively attaches the category of illegality to an allochthonous or even non-national status and opposes it to the category of regularity attached to a native status.

Based on this definition of the mining community, the company, through its subsidiary consultancy office, addressed the administrative and customary natives as representatives to manage the distribution. Unsurprisingly, electrification quickly turned into a dividing issue between recognized natives, whose access was guaranteed through CSR programs, and the considered allochthonous individuals, who had to pay significant taxes in order to acquire access to electricity on the informal market. Thus, people who had been established for long periods of time and gained their autochthonous status within the social space of the artisanal mining fields – for example, through the right to own a shaft, to participate in the plots sharing, or to integrate the *tom bolomas* team – were excluded from access to new infrastructures. In other words, they were considered foreigners again, which had implications for their artisanal mining activities and meant their exclusion from decision-making processes in the management of corporate investment benefits, which only focused on the villages.

Hence, from the control of workspaces, S.A.G., through its CSR policy, controlled specific infrastructures and interfered in the social lives of both itinerant and local resident artisanal miners. Decisions were mainly made by consulting local authorities, and implementation occurred by transferring allocation tasks to local elites. Consequently, itinerant gold diggers were progressively deprived of some of their established prerogatives, which caused conflicts among the artisanal miners. For instance, ordinary energy providers were suddenly accused of cheating on the prices and of imposing an unequal competition with the local energy providers. These artisanal miners often bring their own gas infrastructure from other regions and, thus, competed with the locals who were developing an informal energy market through their access to company-installed electricity lines. As those miners were mainly from Burkina Faso, Mossi-speaking artisanal mineworkers were quickly and violently expelled by resident miners. The same occurred with the management of ore mills and automatic sluices that often came from Malian markets. Moreover, other machine owners who were not residents of the place had to justify their linkage to native families in order not to be expelled. For instance, a *tom boloma* established for 20 years in the region argued in reaction to the autochthony politics of village authorities: “They took me in the militia because I had been a student and I can write. First, they were saying no because I am a foreigner. For me, it is twenty years that I am living here; I know the mines, how to read, to write...of course, I can be a *tom boloma*. But now, again, some say I should not remain in the team. Although I do not even have a machine, some tell me to leave”.

Thus, the unequal allocation of access to energy resources based on autochthony has weakened the usual conventions regulating the presence of itinerant gold diggers. The application of an external categorizing discourse, hence, made symbolic boundaries become social and effective through the interference of renewed property rules on the technical elements needed for the production of gold

in the artisanal sector. The conflict of gold diggers opposing the mining company became externalized to the field of artisanal gold mining, where the company indirectly rules by controlling access to energy in part of the artisanal mining areas. By creating facilities for the extraction and treatment of gold through the energy supply and by allowing leftover zones to remain uncontrolled, the S.A.G. provided a new framework for the surrounding artisanal mining fields, where the issue of access to land was partly replaced by the one of access to energy. The transfer of allocation tasks to the natives’ authorities also contributes to the autochthonization of work relations between resident and itinerant workers. Without controlling space *stricto sensu*, the company, through CSR programs, thus interferes in the social organization of artisanal mining and partially prevents the appearance of gold diggers in its active pits.

Within Kalil’s team, for instance, tensions toward foreigners became so significant that two members of the team decided to leave to go to other mining fields in neighboring Mali. Kalil, who had gained access to the shafts through his *tuteur*, decided to stop extraction in those shafts for some time and became oriented to the unregulated leftover zones with the remaining members of the team. According to Kalil, “we are often called *clando* [“clandestines”, illegals] but to me, it is more because of our way of life that is not like the villagers’. I don’t believe I am more illegal than they are—no one has license, and we all pay the same to the *tom bolomas*...Saying ‘you are a clan’ is *plaisanterie*, like when we say we are ‘officers’ among the *kalayantigilu*”. Thus, although the itinerant gold diggers had already internalized the categorizing vocabulary, it had no impact on their mining practices before autochthony ruled the workspace.

As discussed earlier, autochthony principles do provide conventions in the division of labor within the artisanal mining fields, but a worker’s identification in the social space of the *faro* does not rely upon this category. Thus, as Gilberthorpe and Banks (2012: 186) note, there is a “gap between policy and practice”. In the case of Bouré, the gap becomes visible between social organization and emic identifications within the social spaces of artisanal mining and how it is conceptualized in CSR programs. The discourse of the company attributes a positive landmark on the so-called traditional *orpailleurs* group and constructs a boundary based on illegality by attributing to foreigners a negative landmark because of their supposed trespassing practices. By doing this, the company transposes the spatial border of the concession’s lease into a social boundary between natives and foreigners that was only effective in the living sphere. The legitimated mining community is, hence, reduced to the native status of the village members without regard to their eventual participation in mining activities.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how miners identify, categorize, and are categorized both in the artisanal mining fields and in their living locations. Identifications are subject to negotiation, depending on the contexts, and serve as strategies to foster insertion by emphasizing either local attachments or experiences abroad. Autochthony conventions are not mobilized in a narrow understanding, and they can be overcome and negotiated by bringing forward other identifications recognized in the field of ASM. However, discourses and practices deployed by CSR programs induce performative and rigid categories within the spaces of ASM and extend the power of villages’ elites over the mining areas. Competing categorizations, emanating from either the private sector or from the artisanal mining spaces, have visible impacts on the organization of ASM at the local scale by drawing lines for

identification among the independent artisanal workers and, thus, allocate differentiated spaces for work.

First, through a critical analysis of the deployed practices, it appears that informal agreements give the company a new definition of its territory, without correspondence to its original lease, which allows it to discharge its responsibility of its main burden—the accidents and fatalities of artisanal mine workers on its plots. In the same movement, the mining company forsook coercive control of abandoned shafts, which appears to be a way to pacify the relations with villages ‘authorities’. This shift in the regulation of patrols and control permits the company to maintain and reinforce formal relations of neighborliness with the neighboring villages by the displacement of the category of “trespassers” to the one of “foreigners–trespassers”. In this case, categorizations among the workers push non-natives to either leave for other mining fields or to orient their work to leftover zones, where they are encouraged to take greater risks regarding shafts’ downfalls in particular.

Second, the extension of social boundaries based on autochthony conventions from the living sphere to the working sphere of the mining fields has two main consequences. First, a fringe of the independent artisanal mineworkers is excluded by the natives from positions that they could traditionally occupy (e.g., positions regarding energy supply and mechanized equipment for the processing of gold). Then, the reverse effect is that workers who were considered natives became assimilated to foreigners by the private security and the police when trespassing on the borders of the company. Despite an obvious gap between the categories mobilized by the company and the emic identifications among the ASM workers, the provision of infrastructure in specific locations contributes to reactive autochthony conventions that were traditionally not salient in ASM spaces. In consequence, the socio-technical system of ASM in the region is transformed, which is not without initiating conflicts in the distribution of resources, including the expulsion of non-nationals workers and the banning of itinerant workers from strategic positions. From the gold miners’ point of view, be they locals or itinerants, the application of CSR programs de facto intervenes as a competing basis for justification (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2008) for the procurement of the needed resources for the extraction of gold.

In a context where the mobility of artisanal mine workers is rising – facilitated by networks in a process of professionalization, despite the informality of the practices in legal terms – CSR interventions of the S.A.G. in the region of Bouré raise questions on the echoes of autochthony claims at a larger scale. For instance, autochthonic discourses have a long history in western Africa, and their political uses by state’s actors have often resulted in their being an important generator of social and political tensions (Bayart et al., 2001; Ceuppens and Geschiere, 2005; Chauveau, 2000). It is worth recalling that, since the presidential election of Alpha Condé in 2010, official discourses on mining resources have also changed. Though the new mining code formally allows for greater possibility for non-nationals to become involved in artisanal mining if they enter the license system,<sup>10</sup> governments usually designate non-nationals as responsible in most conflictive situations. For instance, the first speech given by the Guinean President to the National Association of Small Scale Gold and Diamond Diggers highlights this new trend. After regretting the “lack of organization” of the gold diggers, the presidency warned them against the “neighboring countries taking advantage of the situation”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in most governmental offices concerned with

artisanal mining, “foreigners” are illustrated as partaking in the national wealth.

Far from considering the transnationality of the artisanal mining sector, the official position regarding ASM also participates in the growing divisions based on autochthony discussed in this paper. Thus, as long as the mobile component of gold extraction and the proper modes of organization of this exploitation system are not taken in consideration by decision makers and local administrators, this problem might result in furthering tension among the workers. Moreover, it is known that artisanal mining activities and the related movements of people have not stopped increasing during the last decade ((IOM) International Organization for Migration, 2012; (UNECA) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2003). The traditional seasonal displacements of workers from their home places to the same mining areas have allowed for continuous displacements among more and farther mining fields spread beyond national borders. For most mineworkers, adopting an extreme, mobile way of life has become a condition of their engagement in the artisanal mining sector; as such, it has also become a necessary component of this socio-technical system. Therefore, categorizations emanating from CSR programs based on a generic understanding of belonging through the national-ethnic lens when assessing transnational work practices cannot reflect the situated issues of the workers and, further, generate supplementary conflict among them by externalizing the competition for resources.

### Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Prof. Katja Werthman for her suggestions and comments on a draft version of the manuscript. Thanks are also due to anonymous reviewers for their critiques and helpful comments, and Prof. Gavin Hilson for editorial suggestions. Sandaly Kourouma is thanked for translation and support in conducting interviews, and colleagues at MAPS for their helpful comments.

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<sup>10</sup> Article 53 of the 2011 mining code allows nationals from countries that offer reciprocity to apply for artisanal mining permits.

<sup>11</sup> Bureau de presse de la Présidence, August 13. 2011.

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