

# THE MAGIC OF RESPONSIBILITY



DRAWINGS BY  
**COMIKI**

WRITTEN BY  
**W. AA.**

Written by

Samuel Arregoces, Resguardo Indígena Tamaquitos 2, Diana Salazar,  
Misael Socarras Ipuana and Filippo Taglieri

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# Preface

This publication is the result of joint work between various international solidarity groups and communities affected by the Cerrejón coal mine, who participated in July 2019 in the regional public hearing “Diversion of the Bruno stream and the humanitarian crisis in La Guajira” and the visit to monitor and control the diversion works of the Bruno stream, in La Guajira Colombiana, by the company Carbones del Cerrejón. The multinational mining companies Anglo American, BHP and Glencore are the total owners of Cerrejón, each with 33.3% of the shares.

The regional public hearing, convened by the communities of La Gran Parada and Paradero, Senator Aida Avella and Senators Feliciano Valencia, Jorge Robledo, Iván Cepeda, Alexander López and Alberto Castilla, is part of the mechanisms of political control available in the legislation Colombia to make a call to the government and multinationals, when the law is not complied. In this case, the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, as well as the rights of nature are affected. The hearing and the control visit to the deviation of Bruno were carried out within the framework of the Constitutional Court Judgment SU-698 of 2017 that orders the protection of the communities’ rights to water, health and food. It dictates that the natural channel of the Bruno stream should not be exploited until the uncertainties and deficiencies of the environmental license regarding the social, cultural and environmental impacts of the Tajo La Puente exploitation project, as the company calls it, are resolved.

During the public hearing, the communities explained how their position and thoughts have not been taken into account when deciding on their territory. Concluding that the mechanisms of participation offered do not allow them to influence the decisions made.

In the light of the precautionary principle, the Judgment of the Court ordered the Government of Colombia to take the provisional measure of returning the waters of the Bruno stream to its natural course. The Bruno stream remains diverted and the company and the Government refuse to return the stream’s waters to its natural course.

The story developed in the Comic is fiction and is an exercise of collective creation. Some institutions, agencies and public offices are mentioned, but the characters that are presented are imaginary and do not correspond to people in reality.

# Dreams guide the Wayúú people

The Wayúú people have a guide, and their guide is the dream. The Outsú, the older grandmothers, are the people who know how to interpret dreams. Just as ships have a compass that indicates the course to follow, and a captain who directs the ship, what would that ship be like in the middle of the ocean without the compass? How would it get on? How would the captain make a decision without having the compass that indicates the direction where he is going?

This is how the Wayúú people have always been; since long before the arrival of the Spanish we have consulted our dreams. The consultation has always been present and has been part of the Wayúú people. Through dreams we were told everything. A person consulted dreams to make any decision, they said: let me consult a dream, let me dream, let me see what I dream.

So, how does the spiritual part come into it, when it comes to showing the damage done by the Cerrejón mine? How is this damage demonstrated? Right now, the company is drawing up a code listing the damages that, according to them, they have created in the territory, and if anything is not within the code, there is no damage. For us, the damage comes from the interruption of the natural flow of water from the water sources, from damaging that ecosystem, from damaging the ancient trees, from finishing them off, from knocking them down. In the trees there is life, in the trees many spirits who care for the forest used to resid, so that is the great damage that they have caused.

The interruption of sleep at night in the communities within the area of the railway corridor, with the train whistle and the noise of the train, has an effect, it interrupts sleep, interrupts that message given to us through sleep. There have been cases of people who have been dreaming and when they are going to be told what to do to prevent, or to cure something, just at that moment the train passes and interrupts their sleep. Things have happened that could have been prevented if sleep had not been interrupted.

The spiritual aspect of things has been affected. Puloüi, the spirit of the water, is no longer in the water. The lagoons, springs, streams are affected. Other forest spirits, forest keepers, have also been displaced. Spirits are not evil, spirits are caretakers, they enforce a law, so that's why I talk to you about cultural and spiritual damage. Why cultural? We are already losing that, people are no longer consulting their dreams, we are no longer thinking as a people, because we no longer have the ability to consult.

Western companies or people ask you: "How do I pay you, how do I arrange that? But that cannot be said by technicians, experts, that can only be said by Outsús through spiritual work with us.

That is, only to half repair, because the damage is huge, there is not only a person or a subject affected, the work is to repair Mother Earth, and the Wayuú and African descent peoples. But those places where those spirits existed, where those spirits lived, are not going to be reconstructed, because if you knock down a 100-year-old caracoli tree, even if another caracoli tree springs up or is planted, it will not have the same function as the tree that has been cut down.

In the case of the Bruno stream, with the diversion, the artificial channel will never have the same function as it had in the natural channel, because a connection from nature with the spiritual, with the cultural, was interrupted. Nowadays the trees of the Bruno river are dying, but something can still be done to rescue or save them, and that is to return that stream to its original channel so that it can try to recover itself with what it still has left, but in the riverbed. In the artificial channel, you will never find what was in the natural channel.

Misael Socarras Ipuana





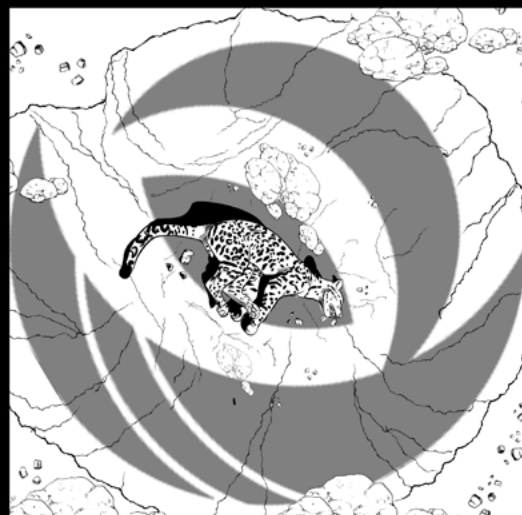
LIFE RUNS OUT



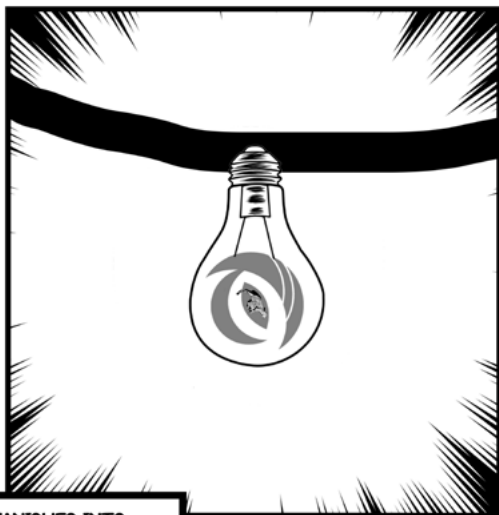
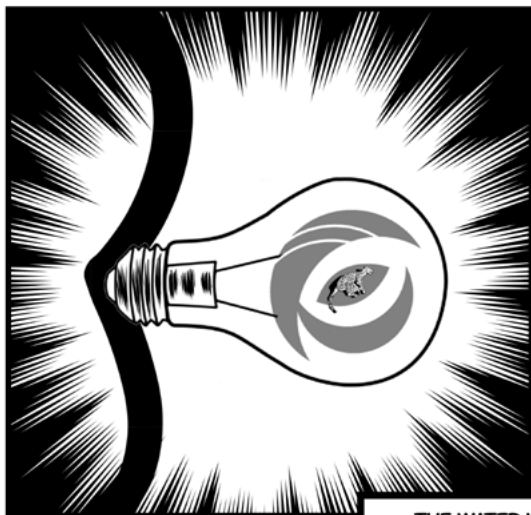




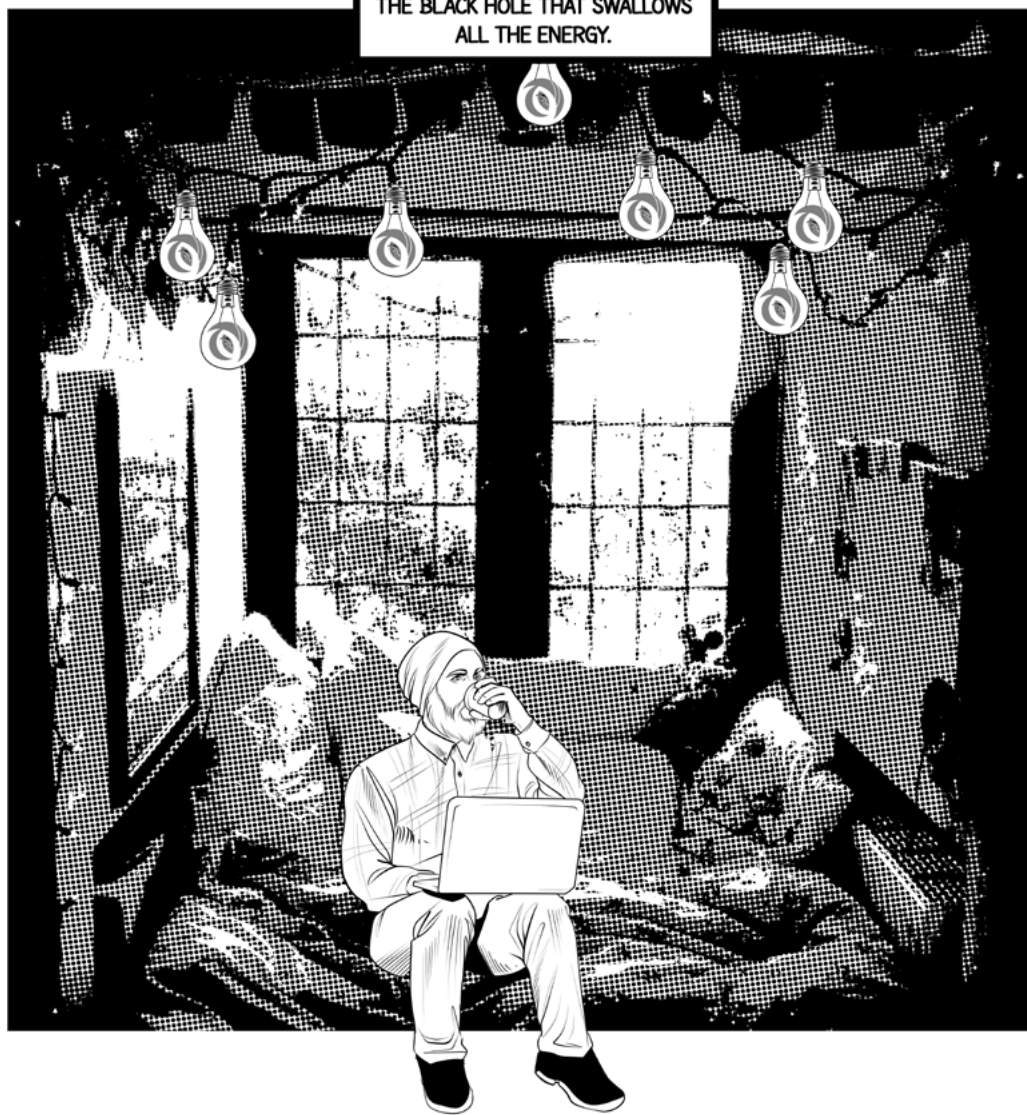
THE OCELOT IS NOW SPIRIT.



THIS DEATH IS A WARNING.



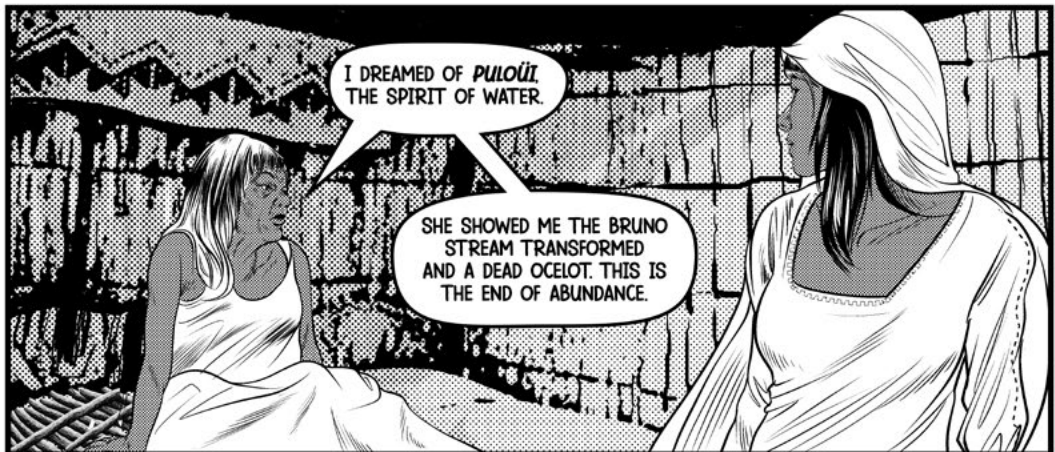
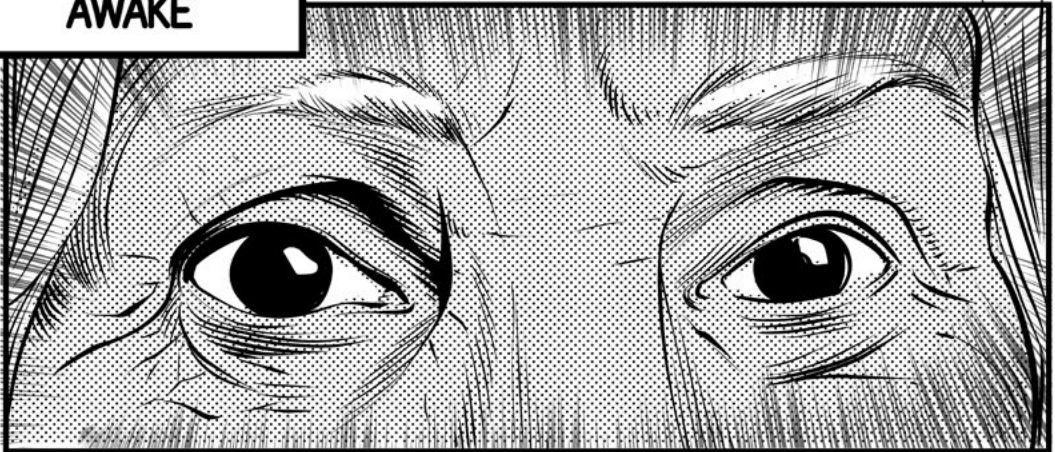
THE WATER VANISHES INTO  
THE BLACK HOLE THAT SWALLOWS  
ALL THE ENERGY.



YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS ...



AWAKE



WHAT CAN WE DO GRANDMA?



THE POWER OF WATER IS IN  
YOUR NAME *WUZIN*

THE STRENGTH OF THE  
OCELOT IS WITHIN US.



LOOK FOR ALL THE CLANS.

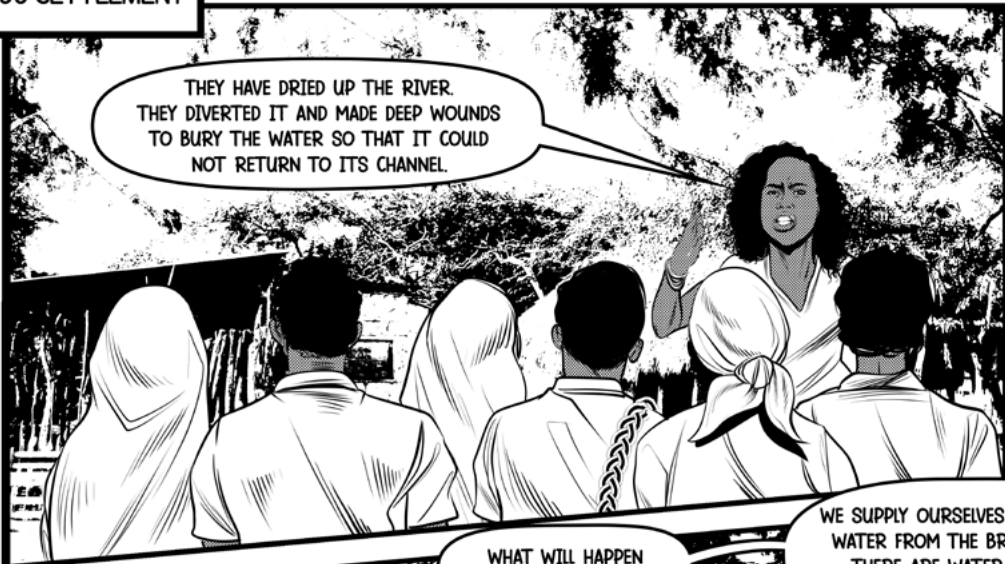


WE HAVE TO WEAVE THE MEMORY  
OF LIFE, OF THE ANCESTORS.

FIND OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING  
IN THE STREAM.



WAYUU SETTLEMENT




THEY HAVE DRIED UP THE RIVER.  
THEY DIVERTED IT AND MADE DEEP WOUNDS  
TO BURY THE WATER SO THAT IT COULD  
NOT RETURN TO ITS CHANNEL.




WE HUNT, FISH AND DO RITUALS  
THERE. WE FIND TREES LIKE JOBO,  
CARACOLI AND OUR MEDICINAL PLANTS!  
**EVERYTHING.**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN  
WITHOUT THAT WATER?

WE SUPPLY OURSELVES WITH THE  
WATER FROM THE BRUNO AND  
THERE ARE WATER TANKS  
CARRYING WATER FOR ALBANIA  
AND VARIOUS TOWNS.



*Pulolit* CAME TO MY DREAM TO  
ASK FOR HELP. WITHOUT THE  
STREAM LIFE DOES NOT FLOW, THE  
OCELOT CALLS US TO ACT.



WE SET UP A MEETING  
WITH THE COMPANY THAT  
DOES THE WORK AT THE  
BRUNO STREAM

TO SHOW US WHAT  
THEY HAVE DONE.  
WE'RE GOING TO GET  
ORGANISED SO  
WE CAN ALL GO



BOGOTÁ



HOW WONDERFUL TO HAVE THIS JOB IN THE COAL MINE, I WANT MY REGION TO BE SUSTAINABLE AND PROSPEROUS.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

IS TO HAVE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, PUTTING THE EMPHASIS ON THE MESSAGE WE WANT TO TRANSMIT

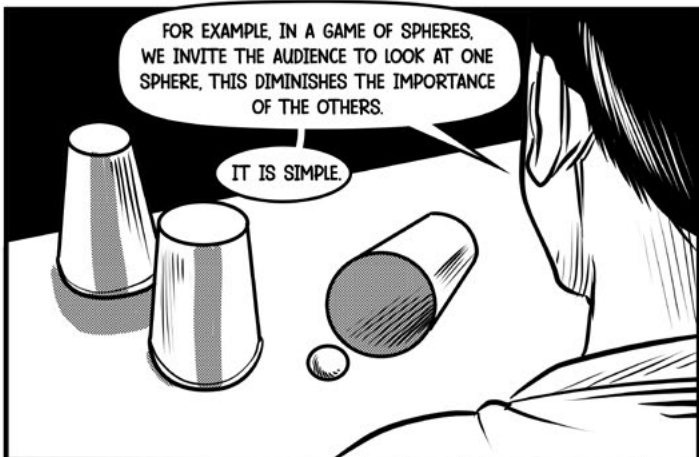


AND FOCUSING ONLY ON THAT AND NOTHING ELSE

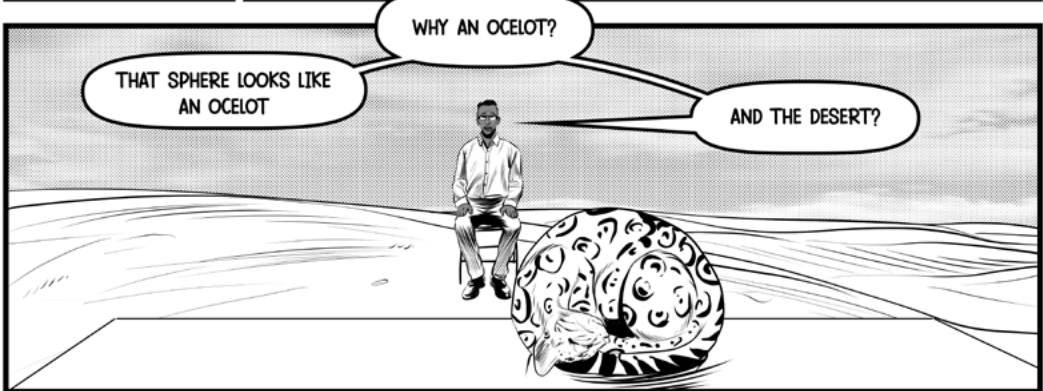
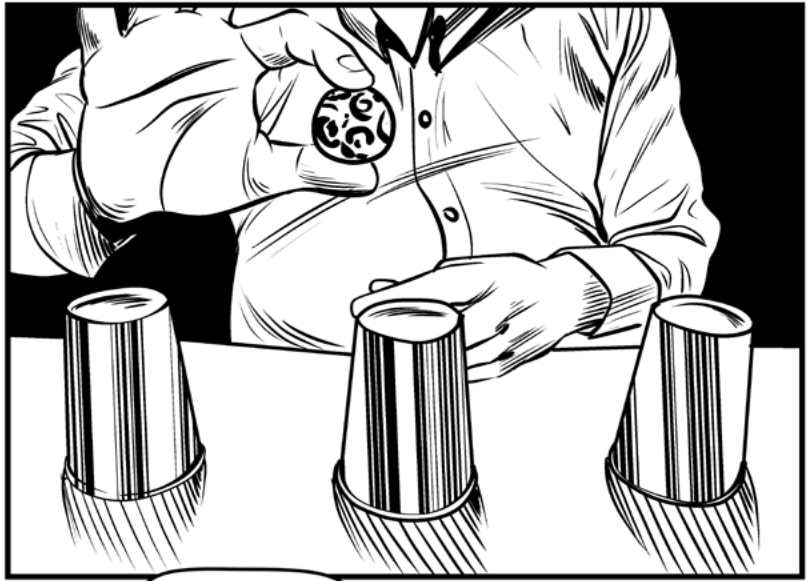


FOR EXAMPLE, IN A GAME OF SPHERES, WE INVITE THE AUDIENCE TO LOOK AT ONE SPHERE, THIS DIMINISHES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OTHERS.

IT IS SIMPLE.









WHAT HAVE THEY DONE  
TO OUR RIVER?



EVERYTHING IS FINE, OUR  
COMPANY IS RESPECTFUL  
OF WATER AND LIFE

BUT THE WATER IS RUNNING OUT  
AND OUR CHILDREN ARE DYING  
OF THIRST. PUT YOUR HAND ON  
YOUR HEART AND SAY THAT!



D. HOW DARE YOU?

TODAY THE COMPANY  
IS PRESENTING ITSELF TO  
EVERYONE WITH COMPLETE  
TRANSPARENCY!



I TOLD YOU NOT TO  
DISAPPOINT ME. CALM DOWN.  
IF THEY MAKE YOU ANGRY,  
BITE YOUR TONGUE.



LET'S START THE TOUR







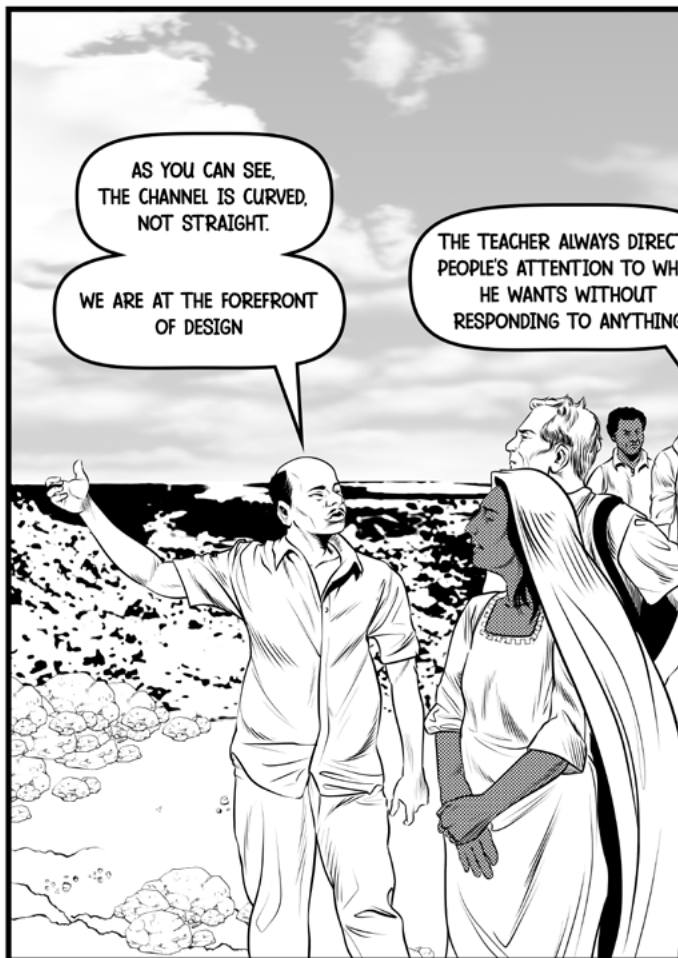
LET'S CONTINUE.  
YOU'LL SEE THE EXCELLENT  
DESIGN OF THE  
NEW CHANNEL



AS YOU CAN SEE,  
THE CHANNEL IS CURVED,  
NOT STRAIGHT.

WE ARE AT THE FOREFRONT  
OF DESIGN

THE TEACHER ALWAYS DIRECTS  
PEOPLE'S ATTENTION TO WHAT  
HE WANTS WITHOUT  
RESPONDING TO ANYTHING







WHERE IS THE FOREST  
TO PROTECT IT?

NO ANIMAL CAN SURVIVE  
IN THIS DESERT WITHOUT  
WATER AND SHADE.



THIS IS TOO HOT, SOMEONE  
MIGHT GET DEHYDRATED.  
WE ARE CONCERNED FOR  
YOUR SAFETY



LET'S MOVE ON AND HAVE  
SOME REFRESHMENTS

IS THAT THE OCELOT  
IN MY DREAM?

THE COMPANY IS DESTROYING  
THE RIVER, AS *WŪIN* SAID!



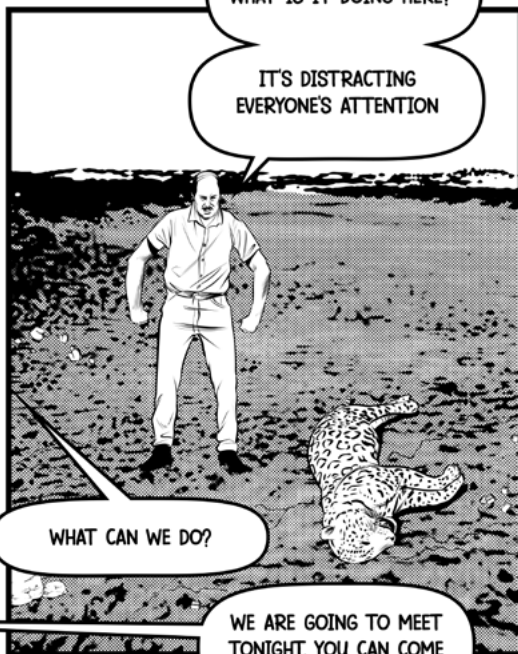
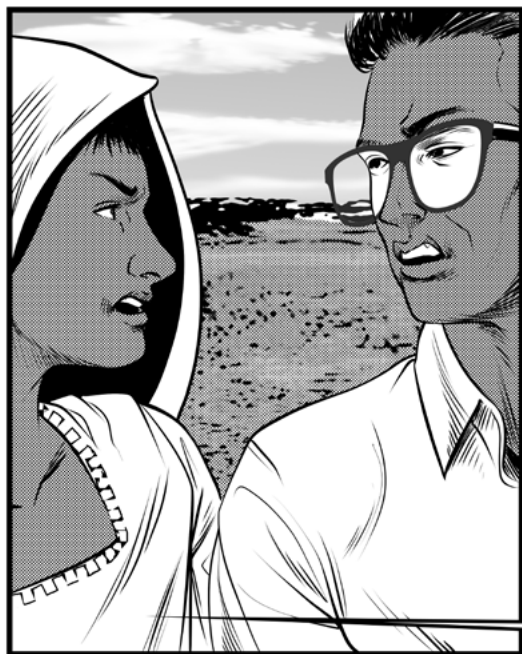
THIS IS THE OCELOT SHOWED  
BY PULOŪI. HE DIED OF THIRST  
LOOKING FOR THE STREAM. IT IS  
AN OMEN OF WHAT IS COMING.

DAMN OCELOT,  
WHAT IS IT DOING HERE?

IT'S DISTRACTING  
EVERYONE'S ATTENTION

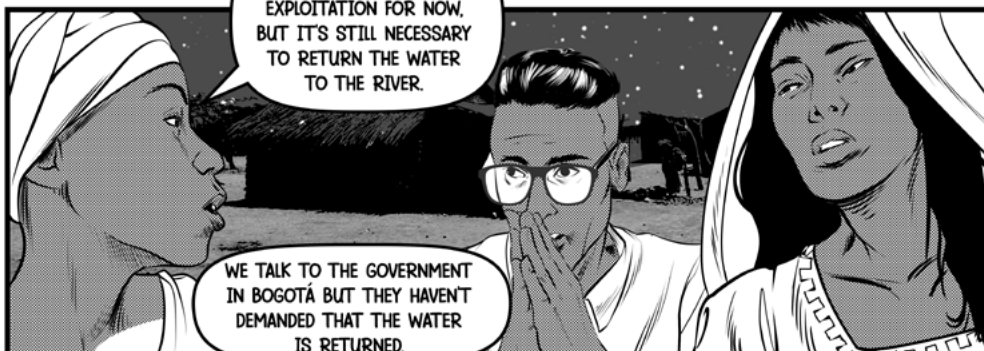
WHAT CAN WE DO?

WE ARE GOING TO MEET  
TONIGHT. YOU CAN COME  
IF YOU WANT.





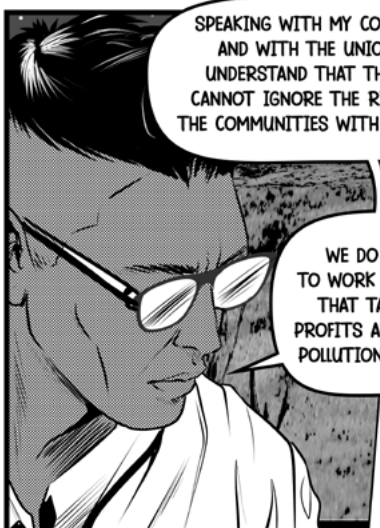
THE LEGAL CLAIM HAS  
MANAGED TO STOP THE  
EXPLOITATION FOR NOW,  
BUT IT'S STILL NECESSARY  
TO RETURN THE WATER  
TO THE RIVER.



WE TALK TO THE GOVERNMENT  
IN BOGOTÁ BUT THEY HAVEN'T  
DEMANDED THAT THE WATER  
IS RETURNED.



WE'LL CONTINUE TO DEMAND  
THAT THEY LISTEN TO US.



SPEAKING WITH MY COLLEAGUES  
AND WITH THE UNION, WE  
UNDERSTAND THAT THE MINE  
CANNOT IGNORE THE RIGHTS OF  
THE COMMUNITIES WITH IMPUNITY.

WE DO NOT WANT  
TO WORK IN A COMPANY  
THAT TAKES ALL THE  
PROFITS AND ONLY LEAVES  
POLLUTION ON OUR LAND













*We can live without coal  
but not without water.*





# Coal Mining in La Guajira

Currently states and multinational companies make agreements and justify their businesses under the banner of an indispensable sustainable development capable of bringing wealth while respecting the environment and the population. This alliance between states and companies has allowed, in the case of La Guajira, the forced and violent eviction of communities at the hands of the police, as well as the militarization of the region, under the protection of the law.

The displacement of rural communities towards populated centres has resulted in their uprooting from the land and the dilution of ancestral knowledge and practices. By breaking the traditional ways of life of the communities, based on agricultural production, hunting and wild fishing, mining multinationals have destroyed the local economy, generating the economic dependence of the region on the mine, through royalties that, in the case of La Guajira, never seem to reach the majority of its population.

Open pit mining has not only destroyed the tropical dry forest, one of the most important ecosystems in this area and which is in danger of extinction globally. Everything that the forest contains has also been decimated, including the rivers and underground aquifers that need the territory to exist.

The reality of those who live in mining areas shows that 'sustainable development' is just a world of illusion, a facade that feeds on broken promises and tricks of communication to maintain insatiable companies without taking responsibility or covering the true cost of their business. This is possible thanks to the impunity that multinational companies have, through the permissiveness of states and the flexibility of environmental, economic and labour policies at the national level, intending to favour foreign investment and thus large companies.

As in a magic show, where the magician's tricks serve to distract the audience by showing them an illusion while losing sight of reality, the mining companies use the media, their corporate power (economic and political), along with their so-called corporate social responsibility, as part of the illusionary tricks to maintain the corporate image of the company while the mining expansion and its dire consequences continue.

In the Colombian Guajira, the ancestral territory of the indigenous Wayuu and Afro-Colombian communities, a semi-desert area that has a single main river, the Rancheria River, how can one imagine that diverting its tributaries does not affect the availability of water resources? And that, together with a crater in the earth covering hundreds of square kilometres, located in the Rancheria river basin, as a result of the extraction of coal, the functioning of the area's ecosystem is not affected? With all these transformations, what is the risk of cultural loss in the area? And what is the effective space for these affected communities to be heard and their decisions respected?

Now that the climate crisis is forcing us to stop using fossil fuels and the price of coal is falling in the international market, does the expansion of coal mining make sense? Are the consequences of these expansions on nature and on communities in the medium and long term being adequately assessed? When companies seek to reduce the cost of production to be competitive under the laws of the market, do they not risk exploiting their workers? For example, the Sintracarbón union has just ended the longest strike in its history, 91 days, to stop the reforms proposed by the Cerrejón company that could undermine the labour rights won in years of struggle by the union. What is the responsibility of the companies that have gained so much economic benefit, once the projects are closed and they leave? Are we in a system that favours the rights of a few, for example, shareholders, instead of the rights of the majority, for example, workers, communities in La Guajira and the rights of nature and everything that lives in it?

This publication is an attempt to unveil one of the many illusions through which states and multinationals drain life while drawing a wonderful world that is exactly the opposite of what they leave behind. But mainly, this work is a tribute to all the communities who defend their territory and seek deep within their roots, their culture and their dignity, the strength to continue weaving from their autonomy a different present and future for this region. The case of the Bruno stream is an emblem of resistance. Several communities, national and international organizations, as well as the union Sintracarbón, have joined forces in the past to investigate, protect and defend this important water source from the greed of multinational mining companies.

# The Magic of Responsibility

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*“Our responsibility is to have effective communication, emphasising the message we want to convey”.*

The comic represents one of the many stories that are a daily experience among communities around the planet affected by extractivism. What for a company is a ‘magic ritual’ for continuing to operate in an area, for communities becomes a divisive element and, in many cases, yet another hoax.

This publication is the result of joint work between several international solidarity groups and the communities affected by the Cerrejón coal mine.

