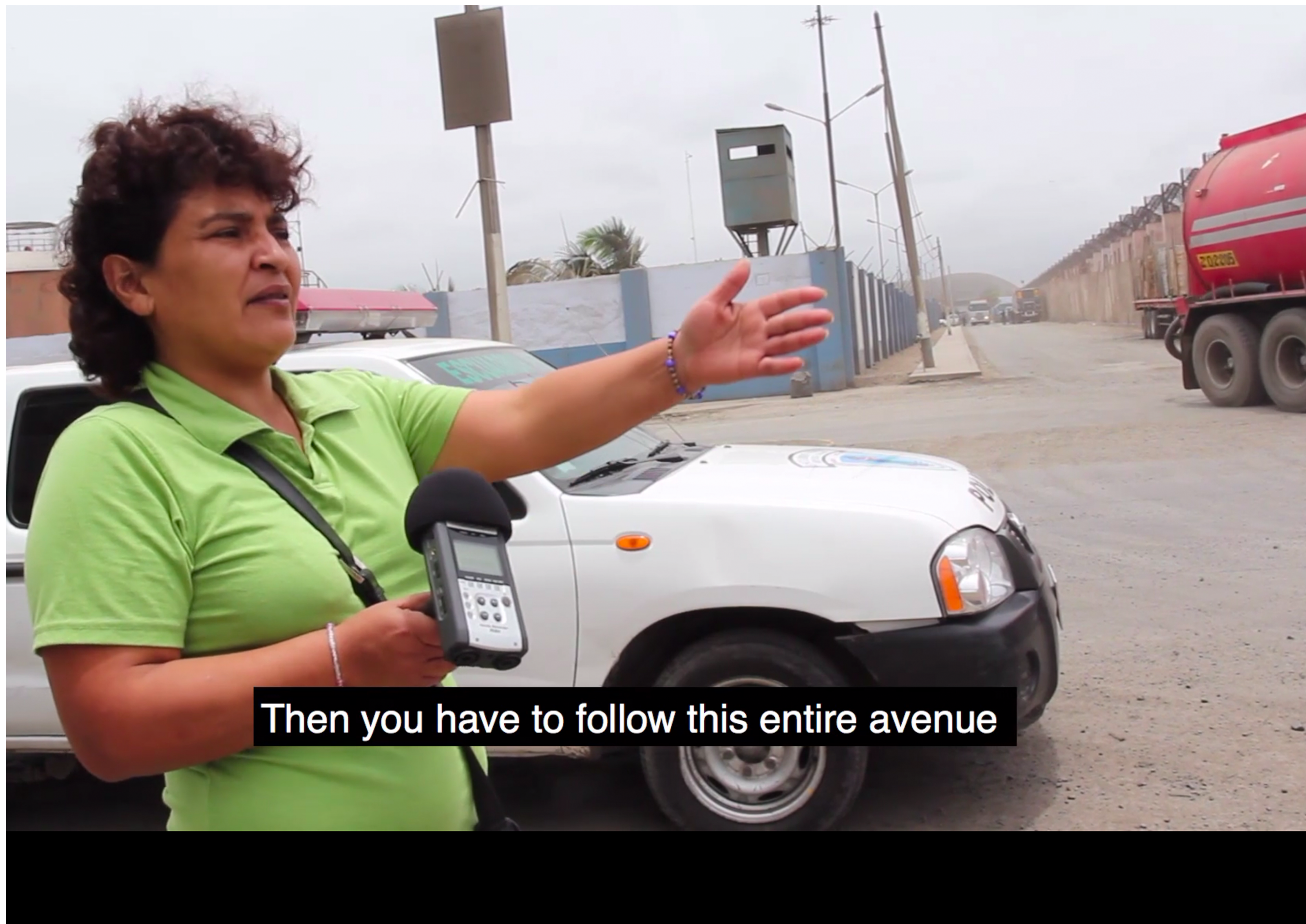


Lead Dust Storms



Caption

This set of images captures the inevitability of leaded dust inhalation at the Port of El Callao. In the bottom image, we see an elderly man forced to stop his bicycle in the middle of a large boulevard at the Port of El Callao, Peru as a truck backs into a mineral storage yard to his right. With the friction of tires, the dust below the truck rises to encase the man in a cloud of particulate as he patiently waits. Just before, Camila (depicted in the top image), a resident of a nearby barrio, explained to the camera how the dust—leaded by leaks from mineral storage, transport, and robbery—enters into suspension due to the passing trucks. She calls them *polvaderas*—dust storms. Residents who must use this road can't help but incorporate these suspended particulates in their bodies: they have to breathe. As if to demonstrate Camila's narrative, the scene of the man on the bicycle occurred. The tires lade the air with dust. The dust hangs over him. He waits, he must breathe.

Design Statement

This image contests the state-corporate technocratic approaches for evaluating and dealing with the lead issue. In recent years, residents were actively excluded from the municipal government's Technical Committee of Lead, which declared them lacking in sufficient technical expertise for contributing to official decision-making. Thus, the image focuses on the expertise of residents like Camila, who have a deeply embodied understanding of the port's material flows, who can offer visual evidence of contamination and exposure that challenges the Technical Committee's claims that the port's toxic problem is already contained.

Project Statement

In 2013, I worked with ethnographic collaborators to visually represent the problematic of lead contamination at the Port of El Callao, Perú via documentary film. Usually unnoticed in the fray of Peru's contentious mining politics, the port presents an unusual but critical site to contemplate the human impacts of extraction through its pervasive condition of toxic exposure. The port is where particulate minerals, mined in the Andes, are transported and stored before being shipped to foreign markets. Residents of the Port of El Callao know from previous scientific studies that their urban ecology contains lead from the storage and transport of mineral particulate and so do their bodies. They are also acutely aware that little has been done by the state or mineral brokers to remedy their situation. In daily life, they are left to observe, hypothesize, and imagine the pathways through which lead enters into their neighborhoods, homes, and bodies. This set of images previews a scene of the film, the "Lead Zone", in which a resident maps the movement of lead particulates outside the storage yards—from soils, tires, air, to lungs.



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Graeter, Stefanie. 2019. "Lead Dust Storms."

In "The Lead Zone (La Zona del Plomo)." In *Visualizing Toxic Subjects*, curated by James Adams and Kim Fortun. The Center for Ethnography. May.

<https://tinyurl.com/yxq82zsn>

