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Whose Development? How Women Living Near the Yanacocha Mine, Peru, Envision Potential Futures

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Among women opposing expansion of mining operations in Cajamarca, Peru, narratives of preferred alternatives diverge: from sustainable mining to alternative economic development, to more radical alternatives to 'development'. In these accounts, both the women's relative powerlessness and agency become apparent. This article critically explores women's views of development and their imaginings of their region with or without mining. I argue that those who opposed mining show a continuing engagement with questions of development in the aftermath of conflict over natural resource extraction, highlighting a common thread of desires for bottom-up initiatives embracing local knowledge, practice and history.

Keywords: Andes, development, extractivism, Latin America, mining, women.

When mineral prices rose in the 1990s, previously unexplored locations became profitable for mining expansion, resulting in a rapid increase of open-pit mining activities in the global South (Lust, 2014). These mining operations are generally associated with negative environmental and social impacts, such as water and air pollution or groundwater depletion and decreased social capital, displacement or and forced migration, respectively (Sosa and Zwartveen, 2012; Cronjé, Reyneke and van Wyk, 2013; Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014). Along with mining expansion, various countries in Latin America have seen a rise in socio-environmental conflicts, often with a focus on water and land (Bebbington et al., 2008; Jenkins, 2014; De la Cadena, 2015). Over the last three decades, neoliberal policies have allowed for an unprecedented increase in both the scale and intensity of extractive activities in Peru, and the country has become a major site of associated socio-environmental struggles (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014).

This article contributes to academic exploration of the aftermath of intense socio-environmental protest, an area of research that is likely to expand over the coming years (Bebbington, 2015). It does so by critically examining how women who had been involved in large-scale socio-environmental mobilisations have continued to engage with debates over development alternatives to mining in its aftermath. I argue that the common thread in their varying narratives was a desire for inclusive, localised forms of 'development' informed by their experiences and interpretations of local history and economic practice.

The article is structured as follows: section 1 sets the scene and section 2 outlines the academic discussions informing my analysis. Sections 3 to 5 critically explore three different ways in which women who opposed the Conga mine frame their discussions about potential and desired alternatives. Section 6 then focuses on some specific difficulties they face in formulating these. Finally, section 7 offers some brief conclusions.

Contextualising Cajamarca

The region of Cajamarca in the northern Peruvian Andes has become an emblematic site in the struggle against mining expansion. In 1993, Minera Yanacocha SRL (MYSRL), a joint venture by the US-based Newmont mining corporation (51 percent), the Peruvian mining company Buenaventura (44 percent) and the International Monetary Fund (5 percent, now owned by the Japanese Sumitomo Corporation) began operations in the Yanacocha gold and copper mine. Before this time, the region's main sources of income had been agriculture and animal husbandry (Franco, 2016; Grieco, 2016). Within Peru, the region is well-known for its cattle farming and cheese production (Bury, 2004). While MYSRL initially faced little opposition, local populations began to voice their discontent when economic growth and job opportunities remained limited while negative impacts such as pollution, displacement, and the depletion of fish stocks became evident (Bury, 2005; Li, 2013; Franco, 2016). Proposed expansion of the Yanacocha mine into the area of Cerro Quilish led to widespread opposition in 2004 (Li, 2013). In 2011–2012, when MYSRL announced plans to open a new gold and copper mining project, Minas Conga, large-scale protests erupted across the region, including marches, strikes and extended monitoring of high-mountain lakes at risk of pollution. The social movement opposed the project on the grounds that the mine's pollution of water and land would have negative impacts on their lives and livelihoods (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014; Franco, 2016; Grieco, 2016; Paredes Peñafiel and Li, 2017). Five people involved in anti-mining protests lost their lives and many more suffered violence and threats from the military and police (Loayza, 2012; Paredes Peñafiel and Li, 2017). Ultimately, the opening of the Conga mine was indefinitely suspended in 2016 (Newmont Mining Corporation, 2016).

A growing body of literature addresses the gendered dimensions of natural resource extraction and natural resource-related conflicts. Work considering the gendered consequences of mining argues that gendered responsibilities and expectations mean women carry more burdens and receive fewer benefits than men when a large-scale mining operation opens in their area (Jenkins, 2014; Lutz-Ley and Buechler, 2020). Work on women activists has shown how they deploy gendered norms and expectations creatively to inform and legitimise their activism (Jenkins, 2015; Franceschet, Piscopo and Thomas, 2016; Grieco, 2016).

In this article, I draw on qualitative data collected in Cajamarca over seven months in 2016–2017 for my PhD research. Using a feminist methodology, I conducted extensive participant observation with women's and environmental organisations: two in Cajamarca city and one each in the towns of Celendín and Bambamarca, all in areas (likely to be) affected by the Yanacocha and/or Conga mines. My initial contact with women in Cajamarca was facilitated through the NGOs Comité Académico Técnico de Asesoramiento a Problemas Ambientales (CATAPA, Technical Academic Committee for Assistance in Environmental Issues), where I had previously worked, and LAMMP, the Latin American Mining Monitoring Programme. I conducted twenty oral history

interviews with women who self-identified as *mestiza* (10) and *campesina* (10), and who were aged from 27 to 66. The women quoted (anonymised) in this article were all, to some extent, involved in the social mobilisations during the protests of 2011–2012, for example attending public events and marches, fund-raising, and cooking for other activists. My aim is to investigate their experiences and views in the aftermath of the intense conflict. Like Jenkins (2014) I do not employ comparison to men, but value these women's stories in their own right. Elsewhere, I have explored how women in Cajamarca mobilise gendered local values and knowledge in continuing to oppose large-scale mining in the aftermath of the Conga conflict (Boudewijn, 2020). In this article, I aim to shed new light on how several women involved in the anti-Conga mobilisations continue to engage with key questions about alternatives to mining and 'development'.

Mineral Extraction and Development

For almost 30 years, successive Peruvian governments have followed neoliberal strategies to promote economic development and identified natural resource extraction as a straightforward path to development for the country. Defining Peru as a '*país minero*' (mining country) creates a narrative that links mining directly to national development trajectories and national identity (Bury, 2005; Himley, 2014; Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014; Grieco, 2016). Himley (2014) argues that the political construction of Peru as a 'mining country' is based on three factors. First, imaginings of the country as richly endowed with easy-to-extract natural resources, making Peru's natural resources emblematic of the 'nature of the country' (Himley, 2014: 178); second, the idea that mining is central to Peru's socio-economic development; third, the notion of mining as an 'ancestral activity' (Himley, 2014: 178), an intrinsic part of Peruvian history and identity. These notions provide proponents of mining with strong justifications for present-day expansions and enable them to label those who oppose mining as not simply 'anti-development' but 'anti-Peruvian'. This type of political construction, which I will refer to as 'mining-as-development', is not confined to Peru or neoliberal governments. For example, the 'post-neoliberal' Ecuadorian government frames large-scale mineral extraction as the pathway to development, using discourses linking support for mining to good citizenship and national identity. As in Peru, when 'mining' came to equal 'development', those opposing mining were understood to be opposing national well-being (Van Teijlingen, 2016).

De la Cadena (2015) argues that fundamental miscommunications arise in political discourse when communities and social movements use the same phrases and concepts (such as 'development') as the state and advocates of neoliberal strategies, while assigning a different meaning to them. While, as Acosta (2013: 9) notes: '[s]ymbolically, development is linked to a promise of well-being, happiness and a better quality of life', in practice, the concept is closely linked to Western-centric ideologies of economic growth (Gudynas, 2013a). Social and environmental movements in the global South often oppose natural resource extraction on the basis of ideologies and worldviews that are not rooted, or only partially rooted, in Western interpretations of (economic) development and modernity (Escobar, 1995; De la Cadena, 2015). Gudynas (2013b) therefore asserts that the notion of development itself must be challenged before the concerns of social movements can be adequately addressed. It is important to note that discrepant interpretations of terminology are not simple misunderstandings or miscommunications: an exploration of the mining industry's use of the term 'sustainable development' reveals

that it is deliberately co-opted to improve the industry's image without having to change its practices (Kirsch, 2010). Such strategies may be seen as part of a deliberate corporate strategy that could be described as a 'politics of resignation', encouraging a sense of powerlessness in the face of corporate power, making current-day expressions and strategies of capitalism seem inevitable or unchangeable (Benson and Kirsch, 2010). Companies may employ a range of strategies from the denial of ill-effects, promoting ambiguity, to co-optation of social movements and their language. Such tactics may be observed in the mining industry when, for example, corporations strategically insert their own version of the history and problems of a region in their Environmental Impact Assessments, making mining appear necessary for regional development (Li, 2009). Furthermore, companies have used social movements' powerful narratives of water pollution to redirect public debate over mining impacts to a narrow focus on 'water management', where, for example, reservoirs may replace polluted natural lakes. In this way, companies have managed to redirect the conversation on the importance of 'water', ignoring holistic local understandings and practices, meaning that one type of water cannot easily be substituted for another (Li, 2013).

It is important, then, to create a fuller understanding of what those involved in social movements are talking about when they speak about 'development', to decrease such risks of co-optation and false equivalence. Women are uniquely positioned to offer their perspective on this. They are noted to be more vulnerable to social and economic marginalisation when extractivist projects alter local economies (Vallejo, Cielo and García, 2019). In their discussion on the changing face of extractivism, Ye et al. (2020) posit that extractivist logic has moved to the core of global capitalism, as power has shifted from those who control goods/production to those who control the flow of goods from one place to another. The logic of extractivism is, therefore, no longer linked solely to natural resources but reproduced in a system of 'production without reproduction', as value is not reinvested in the place where extraction occurs, but diverted elsewhere (Ye et al., 2020: 157). While this article focuses specifically on natural resource-related extractivism, it shares with Ye et al. (2020) an interest in how extractivism creates and deepens inequalities between places, as well as in the spaces of resistance that emerge in narratives of the local and local practices. Such spaces of the local are particularly important for women in communicating their resistance. As political participation is often associated with the 'public/masculine' domain, women who become visible in activist spaces are vulnerable to sexism and gendered violence. Women therefore employ a-political narratives 'legitimising' their participation in activism by drawing on established notions of femininity as linked to the 'local' and on long-standing characterisations of women as minders of culture and 'the traditional' (Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins and Rondón, 2015; Grieco, 2016; Vallejo, Cielo and García, 2019). While there are obviously potential downsides to such self-essentialising narratives, they nevertheless offer valuable tools to women for communicating their concerns. As I show below, narratives of the local are central to how women frame their narratives of better futures and development alternatives, as well.

By exploring a variety of women's narratives of mining and development, this article thus sheds light on continuing conversations in the aftermath of an intense period of conflict. I document their responses to the notion of 'mining-as-development', and highlight the discrepancies between their definitions of development and development as understood by the state and mining companies. In the following sections, I identify and discuss three different but overlapping ways in which women in Cajamarca who have opposed the Conga mine frame their views on mining and development: first, in

opposing unsustainable mining; second, in opposing any kind of mining; and third, in problematising the concept of 'development' itself.

Development with Mining

Rosario (56, *mestiza*, civil servant, Celendín) challenged the idea that she is 'anti-mining', explaining why Conga and Yanacocha do not truly represent development to her:

I am not anti-mining. I think that there should be mining ... where it fits, and in the way, that the people ... that the companies pay them. A lot. That they use the latest tools [...] and that they don't pollute. So, I believe ... extract a little, [...] and give nature time to renew itself, or ... to change, I don't know. But it shouldn't be extract, extract, extract. They leave everything [polluted], look, they don't leave anything for us! (Rosario)

Rosario vehemently opposed the Conga mine and was a community leader during the Conga conflict, fighting for the rights of the poorer inhabitants of rural areas. Discussing her ideas about an imagined better future for the region helped me realise that someone who opposed both the Conga and Yanacocha mining projects does not necessarily reject the notion of 'mining-as-development'. What she opposes instead are mining projects with the disadvantage-to-benefit ratio she associates with the Yanacocha and Conga mines. A similar thought is expressed by Laura (27, *campesina*, student in Cajamarca). A firm believer in the idea of 'mining-as-development', she nevertheless took part in student-organised mobilisations against the opening of the Conga mine. Based on her experience and studies in the field of engineering, she argues that for mining to mean development, improved engagement with the needs of local communities and better environmental regulations are needed:

I think that mining could happen, but ... it should [...] work a bit more in the social field, work, er ... with the communities, and maybe ... find other locations, that aren't located precisely on the watersheds. (Laura)

While not opposed to the idea that mining investment could lead to development, these women argue that it does not do so at the current time, because of a lack of social and environmental responsibility on the side of the companies. Natalia (58, *mestiza*, self-employed, Cajamarca) is very vocal in her objections to Conga and the ongoing activities of the Yanacocha mine and has been very involved in both women's and environmental movements. Like Laura and Rosario, she believes that if local populations' socio-economic well-being were the main driver behind new mining investment in the region, it could bring development:

If the money stays in Cajamarca, there would be jobs here [...] I would be the first to say, 'come to Cajamarca to create jobs', because Cajamarca gives a lot to the world! From here, a lot of things are sent to other countries. [...] What comes back to Cajamarca? Nothing, we don't have any compensation, nothing. What we need here is public works – a lot of them! For the good of everyone. But it's not there. A long time ago, the state committed itself to creating schools, to creating medical posts, to create ... yet, here we [continue to live] as if we were in another country! That's how I feel. (Natalia)

Van Teijlingen (2016) shows how in Ecuador, people challenge the notion that being 'anti-mining' equalled being 'anti-Ecuadorian', refusing to place themselves outside the nation state. Natalia, however, turns the notion of being 'anti-Peruvian' or 'outside' the nation state on its head; arguing that it is the state actors, rather than those involved in anti-mining mobilisation, who treat Cajamarca as if it were not part of the country. She explains that she feels the government's policies have assigned Cajamarca the role of a region where prime resources are exploited – gold and copper, but also milk, cocoa and coffee. As these are processed elsewhere, both the initial wealth and the added value leave the region. Following the logic of extractivism as creating and deepening inequalities between places, Natalia considers this as a sign that the government is sacrificing the development of the Cajamarca region in favour of more affluent regions, highlighting the unequal power relationships associated with the extraction-based development model at the national scale.

Natalia, Laura and Rosario, then, argue that the population of Cajamarca should be enabled to reap the benefits of mining. While they do not necessarily take issue with the 'mining-as-development' principle, they argue that in its current form, mining is *not* development. What comes to light here is a core tension in different actors' communication about the nature of development. These three women seemingly consider social and ecological well-being an important part of development; the very things that mining companies have managed to take out of their definition of 'sustainable development', redirecting it to economic development (Kirsch, 2010). While mining companies may use their power to impose their desired interpretation on the word 'development', these women's narratives continue to challenge the assumptions implicit in the 'mining-as-development' narrative, by arguing that companies should more clearly embrace benefit-sharing and environmental protection as part of their goals and responsibilities.

Development Alternatives to Mining

More critical of the notion of 'mining-as-development', some women express ideas about alternative development proposals that still generally fit within the notion that development requires modernisation and intensification of production (as criticised by Escobar (2007) and Gudynas (2013a), amongst others). They seek it, however, in other economic sectors. For example, Ana (41, *campesina*, cleaner/small-scale farmer, Celendín) and Eva (42, *mestiza*, teacher, Cajamarca) challenge the idea that Peru is a '*país minero*', and that mining is a necessary pathway towards both national and personal improvement:

Recently I heard on the news that the Ministry of Energy and Mining said, 'Peru is a mining country, and will be a mining country' [...] I say 'no' ... there are other options. (Ana)

[In my youth] we did not rely on the mine, on the large salaries that some Cajamarcans may earn now, but [my father working odd jobs] allowed my siblings and me to become professionals, so that means that, yes, that is possible. (Eva)

Ana and Eva come from very different backgrounds: Eva is solidly part of Cajamarca city's middle class, while Ana sometimes struggles to feed her family. Eva became involved in a women's organisation focused on supporting *campesinos* in rural areas on the front-line of the anti-Conga movement, while Ana is one of these *campesinas*;

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she objected to the Conga mine out of fear that it would leave her crops and water supply polluted. Both challenge the rationale of mining as essential for development. Eva explained that like many Cajamaricans, before the Yanacocha mine opened, she believed the narrative of 'mining-as-development'. However, her observations of what happened afterwards led her to argue:

I no longer believe that the mine brings development to Cajamarca [...] I want them to give us the opportunity to prove that Cajamarca can live, and live well, without mining. [...] new economic possibilities could be explored, such as the industrialisation of agriculture, you can't do agriculture anymore as it was done 30 years ago, it must be intensified. Animal husbandry, the industrialisation of agricultural products, Cajamarca can be an industrialised city, not industrialised by the mine, but industrialised by what we have here, the dairy products ... Cajamarcan cheeses are sent out by the truckload! (Eva)

Similarly, in Ecuador, various groups opposing mining expansion argue that they want development, but on their own terms: through agriculture, eco-tourism and traditional livelihoods (Van Teijlingen, 2016). Community alternatives are not necessarily located entirely outside a capitalist logic, but focus rather on regaining (localised) control over the economy (Ye et al., 2020). As for the women cited in the previous section, the economic aspect of development is important for Eva, but she argues that it can be achieved through industrialisation and modernisation. Rather than favouring a less damaging, more inclusive form of mining, however, Eva suggests that development could be achieved in Cajamarca if mining operations ceased, leaving the region free to explore other sources of income, based on its long history of agricultural production and its cultural history with the potential to attract tourists. Her suggestion of intensifying Cajamarca's famous cheese and dairy production recalls Bowen's (2010) discussion about re-embedding food production in particular cultural/ecological settings through branding and name recognition, increasing the region's integration into a national/global market system by promoting local strengths as a development strategy. However, as Marisol (45, *mestiza*, civil servant, Cajamarca) explains, the presence of the mine actively hinders Cajamarca's opportunities to find an increased market for its cheeses:

Who, abroad, wants a product that might be contaminated by the mine's waste products? Nobody. And when, by bad luck, someone finds out that the cheeses that come from Cajamarca have some ... residual contaminants, oh, that poor dairy farmer! (Marisol)

The mine, then, puts the 'brand' of Cajamarcan cheese at risk; the potential of dairy products to serve as a driving force of alternative economic development is compromised. Interviewees voiced similar concerns in relation to tourism: Eva and Marisol argued that increased pollution and loss of natural beauty, due to mining activity, would reduce tourist interest in visiting Cajamarca.

Mining activity in the region, then, puts at risk both current and future alternative income-generating strategies, by compromising the products' quality and reputation. Like the women quoted in the previous section, many interviewees who argue for development without mining seemingly formulate their stance based on a desire

for the region's inhabitants to benefit more from future incarnations of 'development'. They too feel that Cajamarca is marginalised within Peru and believe that the 'mining-as-development' strategy continuously reinforces the marginalisation of their region by not allowing it to develop according to its own needs and standards. The idea of potentially having more autonomy and control over the region's outputs evoked a sense of pride in many of the interviewees. Beyond simply perceiving a need for more jobs, these women no longer want to feel as though they live on the country's periphery. They want to transform the region from one from which resources simply get extracted to one in which the *right* kind of production takes place and money is put towards improving quality of life and services in the region, while economic activities are (re)embedded within culture, social norms and territory.

Alternatives to Development

The previous two sections explored how women challenge the notion of 'mining-as-development'; in this section, I discuss the views of women who went further and challenged the notion of 'development' itself. The line between challenging the 'mining-as-development' and challenging the very idea of 'development' itself is of course not always clear-cut, and women's narratives often moved back and forth between the two.

As mentioned previously, the Peruvian government and mining companies are prone to label those opposing mining activities as 'anti-development' (Himley, 2014). The women I worked with would hesitate to describe themselves as such; rather, they are challenging what development should entail. For example, Virginia (50, *mestiza*, self-employed, Cajamarca) is vehemently opposed to any form of future mining investment in Cajamarca and remains an outspoken opponent of mining activity in the aftermath of the Conga conflict. When speaking of the adverse impacts of mining on social well-being, she linked an increase in mental health problems in Cajamarca directly to the type of 'development' associated with the mine, asking:

This is development? Is *this* the progress they're bringing us? [...] Instead of improving, everything has got worse. (Virginia)

Seemingly, the concept 'development' should mean something positive to Virginia. The idea of 'development' as 'positive' is deeply rooted in Latin America and this makes it more difficult to envisage alternatives (Svampa, 2013; Gudynas, 2013a). However, the type of 'development' Virginia has now come to associate with the mining industry is so overwhelmingly negative that she now challenges not just the pervasive idea of 'mining-as-development', but also the idea that 'development' is positive in the first place. She speaks of development as something that 'they bring' – as something that comes from outside Cajamarca. The question is, then: who is pursuing development? Who and what is it for? This is where some of the women's ideas echo the critiques by Parpart (1993) and Escobar (1995, 2010) of development as an imposition of Western modernity and power on the global South.

Some of the interviewees also challenge the '*país minero*' narrative as a neo-colonial construction, marginalising certain regions of the world in favour of others (see Acosta, 2013; Lust, 2014). Pilar (35, *campesina*, unemployed, Cajamarca), for example, moved from a rural community to Cajamarca city to study, and was heavily involved in the anti-Conga movements. She explained her objection to mining by linking it to a history of international economic power imbalances, whereas Ana (41, *campesina*,

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cleaner/small-scale farmer, Celendín) directly linked the problems of mining to the problems she perceives with capitalism:

Before, the Incas were slaves of the Spanish. [They say] that this has changed now. As I see it, this has not changed. Because by all appearances, we are free. But ... the economic powers, what do they do? They make you live like a slave. (Pilar)

We know what capitalism is like, we've seen capitalism. And in other places, it works the same way; but maybe people don't see that. But here, we've seen how the state that takes our taxes, that should protect us – how they kill us. How they ... marginalise and belittle us. And you feel like you're nothing. (Ana)

Like the women cited in the previous sections, Virginia, Ana and Pilar want a more equitable system, free from the exploitation of one territory in favour of others. Where they go a step further is in the way they use 'the mine' to expose and criticise the workings of the underlying economic system. Mining, then, is positioned as an undesired outcome imposed on people by the logic of the extractivist capitalist model under the guise of development (Ye et al., 2020). They challenge this system's inherent need to reduce some territories to the status of 'suppliers' for others to grow or maintain their way of life, and they problematise the 'mining-as-development' paradigm's reliance on social and economic imbalances: the exploitation in the name of 'progress' of poorer regions within countries, and poorer countries within the world.

Some women discussed the personal responsibility they feel to resist certain types of 'logic', associated with this model for economic development. Elizabeth (48, *campesina*, farmer, Cajamarca) lives on the outskirts of Cajamarca city and relies on agriculture for her livelihood. Her opposition to mining projects is based on everyday interactions with her land. Challenging the assumptions implicit in the logic of development, she said:

Most of us are already convinced that capitalism will leave us with pollution, and without resources. [...] We have to attack this whole system, but for that, we will have to change some of our customs, and we don't want to give up our comforts. (Elizabeth)

Individualism and consumerism are among the main obstacles to thinking about alternatives to capitalist-inspired development thinking, which holds that higher levels of consumption mean a better way of life (Lander, 2013; Svampa, 2013). Elizabeth argues, then, that the local population has a responsibility to overcome the forces of individualism and materialism before they can challenge the negative aspects of development overall. Both she and Pilar (35, *campesina*, unemployed, Cajamarca) challenge another classic notion of capitalism: that 'the pie' always needs to expand:

I think that the mine doesn't even bring development. I think there are other types of development. [...] Look, I would prefer that, that my village remains in poverty, I mean, I speak of poverty that way, because ... everyone says: 'those from the countryside are poor' – but they're not the poor ones! Because there isn't a day that we don't have food. [...] we won't have money, but we have [enough] to eat. [In Cajamarca city] you get used to ... money being the most important, because if [you don't have it], you can't eat. (Pilar)

We're poor not because of what we have, but because of our way of thinking. (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth suggests a need to reconsider what it means to be poor, and asks, rather, what a person needs in order to live [well]. Indigenous Amazonian women in Ecuador use similar narratives while speaking about their opposition to the discourse of natural resource extraction as development (Vallejo, Cielo and García, 2019). They draw upon their positionality as women and their reproductive roles, which put them in contact with 'natural and supernatural beings in a relationship of mutual sustenance' (Vallejo, Cielo and García, 2019: 188), to argue that wealth and well-being are to be found in their natural surroundings. Similarly, scholars who challenge 'universal truths' about poverty, suggest that economic growth should only be a means to an end and promote de-growth and alternative economies (see for example Svampa, 2013; Villalba, 2013; Gudynas, 2013b). Elizabeth and Pilar think along the lines of small-scale agriculture and local markets. Like other women, they told me of the importance of buying local produce sold by *campesinos* at the market, rather than from international supermarket chains and shopping malls. As women are often responsible for shopping for food for their household, buying locally represents an ongoing expression of resistance. While selling or buying local produce at small markets may not seem like a great act of opposition, by their very existence these markets become a place of defiance of the dominant economic system, based on rights to nature and food (Ye et al., 2020). This is especially important for women, who often incorporate narratives of their links to nature, their care roles and the traditional into their logic of resistance (Jenkins, 2015; Grieco, 2016). In other words, foregoing the homogenising/de-localising tendencies of globalisation in favour of a way of life that is more local and historically embedded is a central and gendered way in which women imagine futures without mining, or without development as reliant on economic growth.

Svampa (2013) shows how thinking about alternative forms of development from the Latin American grassroots often involves imagining futures by combining rehabilitated Latin American ideas with new, locally appropriate concepts. She cites the narratives arising in *buen vivir* thinking but also appearing more broadly in eco-feminism and the socio-environmental movements that have sprung up around the continent. *Buen vivir*, translated as 'living well', is the best-known Latin American idea about alternatives to development, referring to indigenous cosmovisions concerning well-being and community (Svampa, 2013; Gudynas, 2013b). While the Cajamarcan socio-environmental movements do not necessarily consider themselves indigenous, they arguably share common elements in their focus on 'goods, territory, food sovereignty and living well' (Svampa, 2013: 135). Maria (36, *campesina*, farmer, Celendín), who divides her time between farming and participating in women's and environmental groups, says *buen vivir* is not something that is currently discussed in the groups she is involved with, but commented:

We do have an alternative plan for development, but it is not new, it is about what has been left behind. (Maria)

In Andean societies, using the past to imagine desired futures, and particularly invoking the Inca period in order to do so, is not uncommon (Galindo, 2010; Himley, 2014). Cajamarcan women similarly invoked this period as an idyllic and more egalitarian time:

If [the mine] hadn't existed I don't know what our life would have been like [...] Who knows, maybe the way of life of the Incas would have been

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better? Bartering: you give me ... that juice, and I give you a kilo of potatoes. It would be better. (Pilar, 35, *campesina*, unemployed, Cajamarca)

I would've preferred to remain Inca. Of course! 'Ama sua, ama llulla, ama quella' – don't steal, don't lie, don't be lazy. (Marisol, 45, *mestiza*, civil servant, Cajamarca)

Both *campesina* and *mestiza* women in Cajamarca, then, may look to the imagined period before Spanish colonisation to see how a different model of well-being might be conceived. Even though Cajamaricans generally do not identify as indigenous (Coxshall, 2010; Svampa, 2013), most women with whom I spoke did not hesitate to describe their heritage as pre-Hispanic, incorporating this into their interpretations of what life without 'mining' or westernised notions of 'development' might look like. The worldviews of women involved in Cajamarcan social movements clearly overlap with *buen vivir* discourses, positioning these women within wider contemporary Andean narratives and practices. On the other hand, we should be wary of grouping social movements under a banner that does not necessarily fully capture the specificity of how they envision locally appropriate forms of development. Trying to fit the women's narratives into specific boxes, such as *buen vivir*, may leave social movements more vulnerable to a re- or mis-direction of their core concerns, or to deliberate corporate co-optation. What I wish to underline in discussing these women's visions of desirable futures is how their bottom-up formulations of potential alternatives are embedded in the local and historical, the particular and different, rather than in the global and uniform.

Fears and Hopes

While the Conga mine did not open, the looming threat of further expansion of mining projects and their potential socio-environmental impacts was always present in the accounts of women I interviewed, and also at meetings, workshops and training sessions I attended across the Cajamarca region. As a result, formulating concrete alternatives and development strategies was often the main priority of the women's and environmental groups. Scholars have commented that social movements often find formulating alternatives to extraction-based development models particularly difficult (Bebbington et al., 2008; Gudynas, 2013b; Lust, 2014). The women and the organisations I worked with highlighted their perceived inability to provide a satisfactory answer to the question 'what do you propose instead?' – a question that was regularly asked of them both during and after the protests against the Conga mine. The onus of coming up with an alternative was thereby placed on the activists, and this is a difficult burden to carry. Many women considered their inability to give a straightforward answer as the movement's main shortcoming. Not surprisingly, then, they continued to engage with the question in the aftermath of the conflict, both individually and collectively. They voiced a growing recognition that, perhaps, protesting – while obviously not easy (and, in fact, potentially dangerous: Paredes Peñafiel and Li, 2017) – was the easier part: saying 'no, we are against this', but not yet 'what we want, instead, is ...'. Emma (43, *campesina*, activist, Celendín), an advocate for poorer *campesinos* in Celendín province, said:

The mines came twenty years ago and that gave impetus to the idea that we could get out of poverty and develop the region of Cajamarca. That we had to take all the metals, never mind the water. Now the people have stood up, the *campesinos* say ‘no, we don’t want this model, the mine brings wealth to a few, poverty to many ... because of water, pollution and destruction’. We want another model of development. We have to make it so that this could be developed. But they say, ‘then why don’t you do “development”, can you not make it happen?’ – it won’t happen from one day to the next. We need deeper changes. (Emma)

This demonstrates the struggle within the movements to take their positions beyond saying ‘no’ to one individual project – the Conga mine – to saying ‘no’ and ‘instead’ to the larger system promoting such projects. The anti-Conga movements brought together those who oppose only the Conga mine itself, those opposing all forms of mining, and those rejecting notions of ‘development’ more drastically. However, when it comes to proposing concrete alternatives, starting from such different viewpoints becomes a problem.

Furthermore, while acknowledging individual and collective power and responsibility in striving for alternatives, there is an obvious power imbalance between the women and local communities, on the one hand, and the ‘mining-as-development’ paradigm as endorsed by the Peruvian government and the international corporations at work in Cajamarca, on the other. The types of future that can be considered possible for a country or region are severely constrained when the future becomes linked to a vocabulary of development in general and of ‘mining-as-development’ in particular (Esteve, Babones and Babcicky, 2013; Himley, 2014). This goes some way to explaining the seeming contradiction of the apparent lack of optimism observed after the social movements had succeeded in blocking the opening of the Conga mine. While this project may have been shelved indefinitely, a narrow definition of ‘mining-as-development’ remains prevalent in the futures imagined for the region and country. The overwhelming power imbalances promote a sense of powerlessness and of inability to bring about alternatives, encouraged by what Benson and Kirsch (2010) describe as ‘the politics of resignation’. When the term ‘development’ is understood differently by a wide variety of actors, mining companies stand to benefit from the associated confusion and may use their influence to keep the term firmly rooted in the economic sphere, suppressing other possible interpretations. In order to challenge the term ‘development’, then, it is important make visible such processes of meaning-making.

In the face of potential co-optation, however, new forms of resistance are emerging. Everyday actions, such as buying local food directly from *campesinos* at local markets, become imbued with new meaning and a sense of resistance, feeding into the wider feeling that alternatives to the status quo may indeed be possible. There is, then, also space for creativity and hope in thinking about alternatives for Cajamarca’s ‘development’ and for the region’s future. The aftermath of the Conga conflict has seen women engage with questions, identify weaknesses, and mobilise themselves to propose alternatives. Where their accounts converge is in the use of narratives that are clearly informed by gendered priorities, drawing upon the importance of the local and the historical as opposed to the global and the modern. Furthermore, while the women quoted in this article offer different alternatives to the problems of the Conga project, mining and/or

development, all highlight both Cajamarca's potential prosperity and the need for inclusion, benefit-sharing, ecological responsibility and investment in the things that make the region unique.

Conclusion

The fact that development strategies that do not include the Conga mine, or large-scale mining in general, are now considered 'alternative(s)', reflects how swiftly natural resource extraction has become central to perceptions of what 'development' entails for Cajamarca and the region's contribution to Peru's economic growth. While the Conga mining project may be put on hold, the notion of 'mining-as-development' remains prevalent in imagined futures for the region and the country. This highlights the ubiquity of the 'mining-as-development' paradigm, and goes some way to explaining the seeming contradiction in the apparent lack of optimism observed after the social movements succeeded in preventing the opening of the Conga mine. The legacy of the anti-Conga mobilisation is one of introspection and debate about what alternatives to mining and alternatives to development mean. This highlights the importance of continued engagement with social movements and/or the people who took part in them in the aftermath of open conflict, as struggle does not end when large-scale protest dies down. In this article, I have critically examined three ways in which women who were involved in the anti-Conga movements continue to challenge the 'mining-as-development' paradigm in its current form: fairer and more sustainable mining, alternatives to mining, and alternatives to development. They raised concerns about what the *national* discourse of 'mining-as-development' will imply for their lives *locally*, and seemingly share a desire to prioritise and pursue a type of 'development' (or otherwise) embedded in local and regional types of production, proposing bottom-up, locally-led initiatives that emphasise regional needs and strengths. They oppose what they consider to be a top-down national development, aiming to bring development to the country as a whole, while leaving their region and their families worse off. By framing their struggle as a defence of Cajamarca's historic, place-specific values and practices, then, women who opposed Conga argue that the social movements were a 'common sense' response to the undesirable effects of mining and development, rather than a political divergence from the status quo, a notably gendered response in its apolitical framing of resistance and strong narratives of connection to the local. A thread running through the different proposals for desirable futures for Cajamarca is the idea that development is not only an economic concept but one that should be based on social inclusion and environmental responsibility. To communicate this, the women mobilise imaginaries of living and non-living memory, based on their accounts of life before the Yanacocha mine opened, the negative impacts that mining has had, and a wider pre-colonial imagery of the Inca utopia that is prevalent in Andean Latin America. Here, then, we may challenge the rhetoric of Cajamarca anti-mining movements 'being anti-Peruvian'. While the historical/ancestral imagery of Peru as a '*país minero*' may be mobilised to naturalise and legitimise mineral extraction, Cajamarca was not historically a mining region; agriculture and animal husbandry have long been the main sources of income in the region. Rather than rejecting a historical form of income generation, then, the women I interviewed are arguing *for* them, challenging the '*país minero*' construction of mining as part of the history/'nature' of the country by reference to the history and 'nature' of the

region. By rooting their alternative futures in the local, these women manage to place 'mining-as-development' (and occasionally, 'development' itself) in firm opposition to what is locally and historically appropriate, and therefore, what is desirable for the future of Cajamarca.

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Laura (27, *campesina*, student in Cajamarca)
Natalia (58, *mestiza*, self-employed, Cajamarca)
Ana (41, *campesina*, cleaner/small-scale farmer, Celendín)
Eva (42, *mestiza*, teacher, Cajamarca)
Marisol (45, *mestiza*, civil servant, Cajamarca)
Virginia (50, *mestiza*, self-employed, Cajamarca)
Pilar (35, *campesina*, unemployed, Cajamarca)
Elizabeth (48, *campesina*, farmer, Cajamarca)
Pilar (35, *campesina*, unemployed, Cajamarca)
Maria (36, *campesina*, farmer, Celendín)
Emma (43, *campesina*, activist, Celendín)