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**Negotiating Access, Ethics and Agendas: Using Participatory Photography with Women Anti-Mining Activists in Peru – Katy Jenkins and Inge Boudewijn**

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**Abstract**

In this paper, we critically explore the use of photovoice with a group of women anti-mining activists in the city of Cajamarca, Northern Peru, in order to understand the opportunities and challenges that the photovoice method presents for research with activists. We begin with an overview of participatory photography and photovoice approaches, before outlining the specific context of this research and providing a detailed methodological discussion of the photovoice process and the practical and ethical considerations of using this approach with women activists. We critically analyse the ways in which using photovoice with activists raises a particular set of issues to be negotiated in relation to access, ethical considerations, and the competing agendas of activists and researchers. We situate these debates in relation to existing literature on the use of participatory photography and photovoice in the global South, especially with women, and speak to broader literatures on researching activism and activists. We argue that participatory photography provides important opportunities for co-production of knowledge in research with social movement activists, and has a valuable role to play in enabling participants' own agendas to shape the research process and outputs, but also recognise the particular challenges that are presented by using this approach with women activists.

**Keywords: photovoice, women, activists, participatory photography, methodology, Peru**

## 1. Introduction

Visual research methods in general, and photography in particular, are increasingly visible within qualitative development research, reflecting their merits in facilitating collaborative research relationships (Robinson, 2011), as well as the predominantly visual meaning-making processes of current popular culture (Rose, 2014). Participatory photography is also often employed by feminist researchers due to its emphasis on participant 'voice' and empowerment (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998), and its focus on positionality and equitable research relationships. Participatory photography, as a tool for both research and practice, aims to increase understanding of the daily lives and circumstances of particular (often marginalised) groups of people, with the aim of jointly investigating a topic of mutual interest, underpinned by the assumption that participants will benefit from the opportunity of using photography to communicate their stories.

In this paper, we critically explore the use of participatory photography, specifically photovoice, as a qualitative research method for working with women anti-mining activists based in the region of Cajamarca, Northern Peru. The paper contributes to the methodological literature on photovoice, providing a reflective critical analysis of the opportunities and challenges that photovoice presents to qualitative, feminist researchers. After a brief overview of participatory photography approaches, we outline the context in which the research took place, and explore the rationale for using participatory photography as a means of making sense of activists' perspectives, in this case what 'development' means to women activists living with large-scale natural resource extraction (specifically gold mining). We then go on to critically analyse some key issues that reflect the particularities of conducting this sort of research with activists, exploring challenges related to gaining, and maintaining, access; ethics, ownership and anonymity; and negotiating the sometimes competing agendas of activists and researchers. Throughout, we consider the utility and challenges of using

these methodologies with women activists, and emphasise the importance of reflexivity and ongoing communication with participants in successfully putting such approaches into practice.

### 1.1 Participatory photography and photovoice approaches

Participatory photography refers to a group of visual methodologies, with a high degree of overlap between them – including photo elicitation; photovoice; photo interviews; and photo novellas. Here, whilst drawing on the broader participatory photography literature, we specifically focus on photovoice, a research method coined and popularized by Wang (e.g. 1997; 1998; 1999), that is closely related to the photo-interview (Kolb, 2008; Packard, 2008). Photovoice is described as:

> A process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. (Wang & Burris, 1997, p.369).

This technique involves having research participants take photographs, so that they can record what is important to them, and "reflect on photographs that mirror the everyday social and political realities that influence their lives" (Wang et al., 1998, p.80). This gives participants the opportunity to articulate and promote the kinds of change that they would like for their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997). The goals of photovoice then, are to enable people:

> (1) to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers. (Wang, 1999, p.185)

As with other participatory forms of research, the aim of participatory photography is to enable research participants to contribute more deeply to the research process than is often the case with

more traditional methodologies, including refining the thematic focus of the research and shaping its direction and development. They are enabled and encouraged to reflect on the research themes and questions, which are themselves often defined through dialogue with the participants. Participants play an active part in designing the research, enriching it with local knowledge. Scholars argue that by situating the research in relation to participants' everyday, lived environments, they can become researchers and advocates for their own circumstances and take ownership of the project (Bell 2015; Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012; Harper, 2002; Kolb, 2008; McIntyre, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997), opening up spaces for discussing imagined futures (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012). A common argument for using visual methodologies, then, is that they are more than simply a different way to generate research data, instead creating new and different knowledges compared to those generated by more traditional research methods such as stand-alone interviews. Participatory photography gives the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into aspects of their participants' lives that would otherwise be hard to access, see or explain (Mizen and Ofosu-kusi, 2007; Packard, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Fraser *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, when participants reflect upon a picture they have taken during an interview, they may articulate things otherwise taken for granted and unarticulated; adding another layer to the data. Photographs may therefore enable us to develop more holistic understandings of the multiple dimensions and complexities present in everyday life in a way that would not otherwise be possible, creating knowledges that might otherwise remain unexplored (e.g. Wang, 1999; Harper, 2002b; Kolb, 2008; Packard, 2008; Guillemin and Drew, 2010; Fraser *et al.*, 2012; Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch, 2012). However, whilst these characteristics are very appealing, we do need to approach such claims with caution, and Rose (2014) suggests such assertions require more critical challenging. Similarly, Fairey (2018) recognises that the field is "ethically complex, replete with tension and shaped by the ongoing negotiation of complex agendas that are often contrary and competing" (p. 621), meaning that such favourable research outcomes cannot be taken for granted. This paper aims to grapple with some of these methodological

challenges, and critically analyse how they play out in the context of undertaking research with activists in the global South.

**1.2 Photovoice and activism**

The photovoice method assumes that people themselves are best placed to raise and define their own issues, most pressing needs and interests. The method is based on principles of feminist theory combined with a community-based approach, with participants becoming advocates for both their own and their community's wellbeing (Bell, 2015; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998). Participants, who are often drawn from marginalised and/or difficult to access groups (Kolb, 2008; Prins, 2010), are enabled to use photography to challenge notions of themselves imposed from outside, and to make their views more present and visible in research and policy making (Prins, 2010):

> Photovoice invites us to look at the world through the same lens as the photographer and to share the story the picture evokes for the person who clicked the shutter. (Booth and Booth, 2003, p. 432)

Photovoice in particular is conceived as a tool that can help marginalised people learn and take action, leading to increased self-esteem and new perspectives, due to the new experiences and knowledges that are generated by participants in the process (Bell 2015; Packard, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). We argue that these attributes also mean that photovoice particularly lends itself to being used by and with activists, whose activities and perspectives already have an emphasis on social change, challenging marginalisation, and influencing others.

One particular aspect of working with activists, is that they may already be accustomed to participating in research. This means they are likely to be more comfortable with speaking out and having their voices heard. In this respect, Packard (2008) explores how valuing or expecting to have your voice heard is a learned skill, the lack of which was a particular obstacle in his research with homeless men. Weber (2018) similarly found that political agency is needed for participatory photography to enable change through its participants, posing difficulties in her case, as the women she worked with had little agency due to their subordinated position within their communities. In this sense, working with women *activists* is beneficial, as they are likely to have more confidence and experience in speaking out. On the other hand, activists may be more used to telling their story, and may already have a strongly formulated narrative in mind, potentially making the research less spontaneous and open-ended, and risking a well-practiced narrative being reproduced in the research (see also Jenkins 2007). Introducing a less commonly used research method such as participatory photography provides an opportunity to unsettle or disrupt these practiced narratives of activism, and develop a more nuanced account of activists' perspectives. This speaks to broader debates foregrounding activist subjectivities and everyday lived experiences (Horton and Kraftl, 2009; Askins, 2015;Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2017; Jenkins 2017; Pottinger, 2017).

Where activists are involved in emblematic struggles that have been the subject of ongoing academic, practitioner and journalistic attention (as is the case in the case study location discussed here), there is also the potential for 'research-fatigue', as:

> individuals and groups become tired of engaging with research and [….][demonstrate] reluctance toward continuing engagement with an existing project, or a refusal to engage with any further research. (Clark, 2008, pp.955-956)

Clark (2008) asserts that research-fatigue can be combatted by having a clear goal for the work, obvious benefits for participants, and a lack of repetition, and we argue that participatory photography provides one means of achieving this. Using participatory photography for research with activists provides an important opportunity to develop resources, and a public presence and legitimacy, that can be especially useful to participants and their organisations, enabling a less extractive approach to data collection. Such an approach can contribute to softening power inequalities between researcher and researched, and providing a degree of reciprocity, both foregrounded by feminist researchers.

### 1.3 Women and Participatory Photography

Given its emphasis on centring marginalised views, participatory photography is often used to reach people who are vulnerable to being overlooked by more traditional research methods (Robinson, 2011). Wang and Burris (1997) argue that women are often at risk of being invisibilised in research that does not have an explicit gender focus, and participatory photography is considered particularly appropriate to use with this group, offering an opportunity for women to visually represent their own experiences, and shifting the active 'doing' of research from researchers to participants (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2012; Wang, 1999). Bell (2015) emphasises the explicitly feminist origins of photovoice, and its potential to empower participants to see themselves as able to influence decision-makers, noting that participants in her study became more politically active as a result of their participation. Fraser et al. (2012) also suggest it is likely that women's participation increases when participatory visual methods are used, due to their accessibility and the opportunity they present to tell stories through visuals, bridging gaps of communication and dealing with issues around illiteracy. In their participatory photography project with Maasai women, which aimed to explore their often overlooked views on development, Fraser et al (2012) found that using photography provided a way for the women to discuss and (re-)evaluate tradition as they saw fit, enhancing their role in development debates, especially in terms of situating development in relation

to their everyday lives. Dolberg (2007) also used photography with Iraqi women as a way to uncover their often silenced truths, gaining a much needed insight into how conflict affected them in their daily lives. In similar projects in Northern Ireland and Colombia, McIntyre (2003) and Weber (2018), respectively, noted that through photography projects, women were able to tell their stories about crisis in their own way, providing a more nuanced version of events, needs, and difficulties. Weber (2018) found that the struggles of the daily life were emphasised by the internally displaced women she worked with, which she did not necessarily expect, highlighting that everyday experiences of marginalisation and inequality remain particularly important for women.

Much of this research with women, in both the global North and global South, has tended to focus on situations of war and crisis (McIntyre, 2003; Dolberg, 2007; Weber, 2018), and on health (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999), or is specifically concerned with understanding women in marginalised positions (Bell 2015; Fraser *et al.*, 2012; Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch, 2012). Little research has used participatory photography with women activists,[1] nor in the context of natural resource extraction. A particularly relevant example of the use of photovoice in feminist research, comes from Bell (2015), who focuses on photovoice's potential as a tool for conducting feminist activist ethnography, in this case in the context of exploring the negative impacts of coal mining on marginalised communities in Appalachia. Bell particularly foregrounds the potential for photovoice to be used by both local populations and academics to influence policymakers. While the coal mining context was central to Bell (2015)'s research, she notes that most of the women involved did not identify as activists. While they used their photo project to express critical/negative views of the coal industry, most of them did not consider their personal goals to allign with those of environmental activist groups. The research with women activists we discuss here therefore provides an original lens through which to critically explore the challenges and particularities of using this approach with women anti-mining activists.

[1] Though see Fairey's (2017) discussion of the now iconic TAFOS project in Peru, where many of the participants (both male and female) were politically active.

**1.4 The photovoice process**

There are different ways to approach photovoice, but generally the process includes the following stages. First, an initial workshop is held where participants are introduced to the project, and familiarised with the use of cameras (which may take more or less time depending on participants' previous experiences (Rose, 2014)). Issues of ethics, health and safety, potential risks of participation, and participants' expectations of the project are all addressed in detail at this stage (Guillemin and Drew, 2010; Weber, 2018). The time dedicated to this initial phase of course depends on the context of the project and the participants, and can vary considerably. Participants are then usually given cameras for a defined period, and the researcher moves to the background as participants become the central actors, as photographers. In some instances, participants take photos according to themes or research questions that were discussed in the preparation phase; in others, they take photos of their daily lives or what is important to them generally, and themes then emerge in group discussion about the photographs afterwards, or in the analysis done by the researcher (Kolb, 2008; McIntyre, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997). This is the phase where participants are considered to take the most ownership of the research (Kolb, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Depending on the structure of the project, participants will either meet at regular intervals with the researcher, or at the end of the project, to reflect on their own, and each other's, photographs and the emerging themes (McIntyre, 2003), usually selecting a set of preferred images to contribute to a final output or exhibition. Participants are also supported to develop narratives, captions, poems etc to accompany their images. In individual interviews, participants then discuss their images with the researcher, generally focusing on the why and the how, and the 'message' of each particular photo. Since sometimes participants take many photos, Kolb (2008) recommends that they themselves select the photographs they most want to discuss, and in what order. This gives them some power over the interview process, as the photos they have taken and selected fundamentally shape and direct its course. However, topics may arise that are not seemingly related to the photographs, as

during the interview, intents are elaborated upon, and hidden feelings, emotions and information can come to the surface (Thallon, 2004; Kolb, 2008; Weber, 2018).

Harper (2002) highlights that photos do not *automatically* lead to a good, useful or beneficial interview, and it is therefore important that the researcher is clear about the information they aim to elicit. Ideally, within the interviewing process, trust, dialogue and mutual learning occurs and the traditional hierarchy of researcher-participant, as well as cultural barriers, are overcome by the presence of the photographs and the participants' knowledge and expertise on them, and their direct way of conveying meaning (Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Harper, 2002; Kolb, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997). However, this is not a universal experience among researchers – for example, Packard (2008) describes how his participants, although invested in the project, would rush through the photographs in the interview and say little about them, emphasising that using visual methods does not negate the need for careful attention to interview dynamics and power relations.

A public-facing output is usually a key element of participatory photography research, enabling a selection of images to be made accessible to a certain public through an exhibition or a non-academic publication, thereby giving the potential to reach a larger audience than most academic research (Kolb, 2008; Prins, 2010). The viewers experience these research outputs more directly, and ideally in a more personal, relevant and memorable manner. Viewing the photographs is especially powerful when accompanied by a fragment of text written or spoken by the photographer, which adds another personal dimension to the viewing (Robinson, 2011). However, the nature of the 'exhibition' is highly context specific, and may not always be appropriate, particularly when dealing with vulnerable groups and/or highly sensitive topics (Booth and Booth, 2003).

## 2. The Project

The research that we discuss here was carried out in Cajamarca, a region in the northern Peruvian Andes (whose capital city is also called Cajamarca), in 2017 and 2018.[2] The region of Cajamarca is renowned for the population's ongoing resistance to large-scale mining, in particular in relation to the activities of Minera Yanacocha, owned by the US based Newmont mining corporation (51%), the Peruvian Buenaventura (44%) and the Japanese company Sumitomo (5%).[3] The Yanacocha open pit gold mine began operations in 1992, promising jobs and development for the region, that was not historically a mining region (Bebbington et al., 2008; Li, 2013; Vela-Almeida et al., 2016). There was little initial opposition to the Yanacocha mine, but economic growth remained limited, and the company did not employ many local people, as specialised professionals were brought in from the coastal region of Peru and abroad. At the same time, people began noticing negative impacts of the mine: pollution and displacement; depleted fish stocks; and increased urbanisation with its corresponding social ills (Bury, 2005; Bebbington *et al.*, 2008; Li, 2013; Steel, 2013). Kamphuis (2010) records the first protests against Yanacocha as taking place in 1999, and in 2000 the relationship between the company and the local population further deteriorated when a mercury spill, from a vehicle contracted by Yanacocha, occurred near the village of Choropampa, exposing around 1,200 people to dangerous levels of mercury (Monning, 2005) and leaving a lasting legacy of pollution and ill health (Moeys 2020). Further protests took place in 2004, when the people of Cajamarca successfully resisted a proposed extension to Yanacocha, which threatened the nearby Cerro Quilish mountain, considered an important source of water, and therefore 'life', by the surrounding communities (Li 2013).

Most recently, anti-mining mobilisations in 2011-12 again brought the region to international attention, in relation to Minera Yanacocha's proposed new open pit mine (the Conga project). The

[2] The research was Katy Jenkins' Leverhulme Fellowship funded research, and Inge Boudewijn worked as an RA on the project in the set up and data analysis stages.

[3] Before 2018, this 5% was owned by the International Monetary fund.

proposed Conga mine also promised to bring development and jobs to the region, but not surprisingly local populations were more wary this time around, highlighting the importance of water and land for their lives and livelihoods, that would be polluted and taken away by the expansion of mining activities. People in the regions already affected by the Yanacocha mine joined forces with people from areas that would be affected by the proposed Conga mine, leading to mass mobilisations in the affected provinces of Cajamarca, Hualgayoc and Celendín, and in the city of Cajamarca itself. These protests went on for several months, leading to violent clashes with the police and army (Paredes Peñafiel and Li, 2017). The protests also attracted support from national and international NGOs and news outlets, giving traction to the validity of the social movements, and in 2016, Minera Yanacocha announced that the Conga mining project would be halted indefinitely (Newmont Mining Corporation, 2016). Both rural and urban women were key actors in the protests themselves, as well as in sustaining the social movements over time, and women continue to be active in contesting large-scale resource extraction projects in the region (see, for example,Boudewijn 2020 and Boudewijn in press).

In this context of prolonged and ongoing resistance to mining, alongside ongoing large-scale extraction, the research we discuss here aimed to bring to the fore women activists' perspectives on the much-contested notion of 'Development' (Escobar, 1995) and to provide a space for women to articulate and think through possible alternatives to extractives-led Development.[4] This focus reflects ongoing debates across Latin America and the global South around post-extractivism, Development alternatives and ideas about *buen vivir*/living well (Lang & Mokrani 2013; Radcliffe 2015; Walsh 2010), and was a priority for these women and their organisations at that time. In this paper, we restrict ourselves to a methodological reflection on the project, and do not explore the empirical findings.[5] Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch (2012) and Weber (2018) advocate for participatory

[4] Following Hart (2001) we capitalise Development to denote a 'post-second world war project of intervention in the 'third world' (p650).
[5] We do include a few photos from the project at relevant points in our discussion.

photography projects with an emphasis on hope and ideals, relating to the future, rather than solely on problems. Giving precedence to people's problems may distort their realities, make them feel more vulnerable and negatively influence the way the community as a whole is perceived (Weber, 2018). This project has aimed to focus on the positive and, in doing so, also aimed to overcome the obstacle of potential research fatigue, as well the potential of receiving a 'ready-made' response, by focusing on less explored aspects of women activists' lives. The project drew on existing connections of Katy Jenkins with LAMMP (Latin American Mining Monitoring Programme), who helped facilitate the project, and the local connections of Inge Boudewijn with women's activist organisations in the region.

### 2.1 Negotiating access

The project was premised on the involvement of 12 women activists, with the idea that they would be drawn from a range of different locations (rural/urban) and backgrounds, but would all be active in social movements involved in contesting mining. We approached three different women's organisations to take part in the project, two in Cajamarca city and one in the town of Celendín, with four cameras allotted to each organisation initially. As Inge Boudewijn had already been in Cajamarca for some time, working with women's organisations in Cajamarca and Celendín for her doctoral research (Boudewijn 2020), she had access to gatekeepers within the relevant organisations, and was pivotal in securing the women's participation in the project. Cajamarca has had a substantial exposure to research projects, and referrals through trusted individuals/NGOs proved key to gaining access to the women's organisations. They explained they are otherwise often wary of researchers' intentions due to negative previous experiences, where they consider the work of researchers or journalists ultimately benefited the mining company rather than their organisations. Negotiating access and consent was therefore a sensitive undertaking.

In Cajamarca city, Inge Boudewijn initially approached two women who were both de facto leaders of their respective organisations. She met with each of them separately to introduce the project, providing them with informational leaflets, and gauging their interest in having their organisations involved; both women were interested in this and were subsequently responsible for directly recruiting participants to the research. Both chose women who they felt were active in their organisations, enthusiastic about taking on extra work for the organisation, and likely to see the project through and share information and skills gained with other members of their organisation. We met with interested members of the women's groups to introduce Katy Jenkins, and the project, and to answer any questions and concerns. Both group leaders found four women willing to participate.

The process of recruiting participants was less smooth in Celendín. Despite several visits and meetings with the leader of the women's organisation, by both Inge Boudewijn and Katy Jenkins, only two women from Celendín were willing and able to participate in the research, perhaps reflecting the logistics of travel and the greater commitment that was required given that the project workshops would take place in Cajamarca city.[6] The two remaining places were filled with women from the groups in Cajamarca city. Ultimately, we managed to secure the participation of twelve women activists, from three organisations and a variety of backgrounds, who each committed to participating over a six-month period. Overall, women were enthusiastic about participating in the project and perceived it as an opportunity to gain new skills, both as individuals and to share with their organisations. The opportunity for each organisation to benefit from gaining material resources in the form of cameras was also important to the women participants and the leaders of their organisations, and played a key role in securing their involvement.

[6] It should be noted that participants' travel and accommodation costs were covered by the project but the input of time required was substantial. The relatively small scale of the project meant we were not able to develop separate activities in Celendín itself.

### 2.2 Photovoice in action

The project began with a two-day workshop in Cajamarca, with all twelve women participants, as well as Katy Jenkins, Inge Boudewijn and a second research assistant. This was an opportunity for participants to understand the scope and focus of the project, and to get to grips with the cameras that they were provided with for the duration of the project. Some of the women had experience of using cameras and taking photos, for many others it was their first time using a camera, so we had a wide range of skill-sets to accommodate, giving extra help to those who took slightly longer to get to grips with the camera and understand its basic functions. Activities included exercises on meaning-making in images, discussions about composition, framing and colour, and various 'assignments' designed to familiarise participants with the process of taking photos – from portraits to a photographic treasure hunt. We discussed in detail the issues of ethics and consent in relation to taking photos of other people, as well as covering health and safety considerations. We were particularly concerned not to place participants at risk through giving them cameras, recognising that there may be unforeseen critical and hostile reactions from the community as participants make themselves visible (and therefore vulnerable) by acting 'out of the ordinary' – i.e., by taking photographs (Guillemin and Drew, 2010; Prins, 2010). We were cogniscent that, as a valuable resource, being known to be carrying a camera could also put the women at a higher risk of being robbed. We thus worked with participants to develop clear guidelines as to where and when it was appropriate to take photos, and what subjects were not permissible. We discussed strategies for staying safe with the women, to ensure that participating in the project would not expose them to unnecessary risk.[7]

It was also important that the themes used in the project were not directly focused on the negative impacts of mining per se, in order to avoid confrontation - for example with mine security officials,

[7] Interestingly though, the women framed carrying the camera as a form of protection rather than a danger, giving them the means to record and document any difficult situations they might find themselves in – the example of police violence at protests was used. This also echoes notions of photography as evidence, discussed later in the paper.

police or the authorities (see Kamphuis 2010) - or exposing participants to danger or harm in the process of taking photos for the project. During the first workshop, the project team facilitated group discussions about 'Development' and what this meant to the women, enabling us to collectively agree upon three key themes that would structure the photo-taking activities over the coming months: 'community', 'wellbeing' and 'alternatives to extractivism'. These were ideas that resonated with the women's concerns and priorities, but were broad enough to facilitate a wide range of responses. The women perceived the project as an opportunity to think through alternative approaches to Development beyond simply their collective rejection of mining.

Over the next three months, the women were asked to take photos on each theme in turn. Each woman met individually with the project RA every month to download their photos from the camera: reviewing and reflecting on their images, and undertaking an initial process of 'filtering' their photos to select preferred images. The number of photos taken varied considerably amongst the women, from around 20 images a month to over 50. At the end of the active photo-taking phase of the project, Katy Jenkins held a second workshop with the participants where they each worked with their images to both collectively and individually reflect on the significance of their photos and to choose a final selection of 10-12 images for the photo interview. Of these, the women selected four images for the final exhibition.[8] For the exhibition images, most women also chose to write narratives, poems or captions to accompany their photos and provide meaning and context.[9] Differing levels of literacy and confidence were accommodated by conducting these activities with one-to-one support where necessary, allowing women to narrate their ideas if they did not feel able to write them themselves. Finally, each participant also took part in an individual semi-structured interview with Katy Jenkins, discussing their selected images in turn and exploring the meanings and motivations behind them.

[8] The exhibition was held in Cajamarca on International Women's Day 2018.
[9] Several participants chose not to take part in this activity, due to time constraints or changed priorities which meant they were unable to fully engage in the later stages of the project.

In the remainder of this article, we reflect on the particular challenges that we encountered in using photovoice with activists. We foreground issues around anonymity and authorship; maintaining access to participants; and negotiating the particular agendas that activists bring to the research, in order to explore the opportunities and challenges of photovoice as a tool for critically engaging with the perspectives of women activists in the global South.

## 3. Anonymity and Authorship

The provision of anonymity is standard practice when conducting research with human participants, and a cornerstone of most institutional and disciplinary ethics codes, aimed at ensuring participants can speak freely and without fear of being identified as having taken part in the research or having particular views attributed to them (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011). Whilst this is especially important when working with vulnerable or marginalised groups, or on sensitive or controversial topics, the provision of anonymity, and associated use of pseudonyms, is generally assumed to be the norm in the vast majority of academic research. However, this assumption is increasingly being challenged – by both researchers and research participants (see, for example, Mukungu, 2017; Gordon, 2019) – particularly in contexts where participants feel strongly that their comments should be attributed to them and that this is important in relation to recognising their agency. Both Mukungu (2017) and Gordon (2019) make this point in relation to taking a feminist approach to research, with such research predicated on a commitment to not reinscribing power inequalities and experiences of marginalisation by erasing women's identities. In both these examples, women participants expressed concern and unease that excerpts from their interviews would be used without being attributed to them, and requested that their real names be used. As Gordon (2019) recounts "women felt that their identity and naming was part of them being able to tell their stories, and establish their names and their identities, which they had not always been able to do." (p.547). Thus Gordon frames naming research participants as part of a feminist ethics of care (see also Lomax,

2015), where naming has the potential to bring recognition and acknowledgement to women participants, framing them as experts and bearers of knowledge, an approach echoed in this research. Mukungu (2017) and Gordon (2019) both advocate giving women choice over the use of pseudonyms in disseminating research, but underline the importance of this choice being accompanied by the provision of adequate information enabling women to understand how and where their contributions will be used, and the implications of their names appearing in research publications.

Such concerns are especially pertinent in the context of using visual methodologies, which present particular issues in relation to the ethics of anonymity/naming, in particular the potential for research participants to be identifiable through the places they choose to photograph or through appearing in the photos themselves.[10] We addressed this issue directly in the project workshops, for example through exercises such as how to take a portrait without identifying the individual, and thinking about how distinctive characteristics might make individuals identifiable even when their face is not visible.

Several authors recognise the ethical dilemmas visual methods pose for researchers in relation to balancing anonymity with giving voice to participants (Booth and Booth, 2003; Lomax, 2015), a key tenet of both participatory photography and feminist research. The participant-created nature of the 'data' from participatory photography makes these issues even more pressing; participants are also 'authors' or 'artists' who have produced these images and often (rightly) wish to be credited as such. Thus in participatory photography, anonymity is entangled with authorship. In this project, alert to these dilemmas, Katy Jenkins chose to give the participants choice over whether to be named in relation to their images, and this approach was approved by her Departmental ethics committee. Some participants chose to use their full name, while others opted to use a nickname or a

[10] On several occasions, participants gave their cameras to someone else in order that they could appear in photos themselves.

pseudonym instead. Across all the outputs from this project, full names indicate a ‘real’ name, whereas first names only indicate a pseudonym. In order to be confident that such choices represented fully informed consent, we discussed in detail the ways that the images might be used in the future; though as Gordon (2019) recognises, the realities of academic research and dissemination may often be rather abstract to many participants, despite our best efforts. In particular, we emphasised that, as the images would often be accompanied by interview excerpts, asserting authorship of an image would also render the interviews as attributable to individuals. Additionally, we discussed the way in which once published/exhibited online, the photos would be out of Katy Jenkins’ control and could be used for purposes that might attach different, potentially controversial, irrelevant or contradictory, meanings to them – as Lomax (2015, citing Fink & Lomax 2012) recognises, digital images ‘travel’ and can become untethered from their original contexts and meanings:

> Images may be viewed and re-used, ‘reframed and repurposed’ and saturated with new meanings with unpredictable consequences for participants. (Lomax, 2015, p.494)

The cultural and personal background of the subjective viewer, what is included or left out of the photo, the text or captions that accompany it, and the context within which it is viewed, are just some of the elements that influence how a photograph is perceived (Harper, 2002; Kolb, 2008; Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010; Thallon, 2004). As Thallon (2004) describes:

> When a photograph is removed from its place of origin and is subjected to an audience’s values, then it is inevitable that the work’s meaning will change. (p.8).

There is thus always potential for misinterpretation that the participants themselves may not have considered, which as researchers we need to examine and take responsibility for (Thallon, 2004). This includes making sure participants understand the consequences of making their images public. In this regard, Prins (2010) also argues that we should be alert to the tendency to be overly romantic about the potential for participatory photography to bring about change, whilst underplaying the risks.

Such concerns are especially pertinent in the context of research with activists, often involving sensitive and highly charged situations of social conflict, where activists may be particularly vulnerable and already face violence, intimidation and threats in the course of their daily lives (Jenkins 2015; Jenkins and Rondón 2015; Kamphuis 2010; Velazco Rondón and Quedana Zambrano, 2015; Wilson Becceril, 2018). Whilst in Bell's (2015) research, she encouraged her participants to actively engage with political decision-makers around the negative impacts of resource extraction, in this research we were very alert to these risks and to the potential ramifications of making visible women participants through naming them and publically acknowledging their involvement in this research, and discussed this at length with the women and their organisations. Whilst some participants felt more comfortable not having their real names used, eight of the twelve participants chose to use their real names. These women emphasised that, as they were already highly visible and known in their communities for their anti-mining activism, they did not feel that putting their name to this research and its outputs placed them in a more vulnerable position – a sentiment echoed by some of the women activists involved in Mukungu's (2017) research in post-conflict contexts. Indeed, for many of the women, it was important for them and their organisations that they *were* named, in order to gain visibility for their activism and to show that they were active in continuing to resist extractivism and shape alternatives to it, particularly at a time when anti-extractives activity was less prominent within Cajamarca and many of the activist organisations were losing momentum. Nevertheless, despite this being the preferred approach of several participants, the naming of participants is fraught with tensions. This includes the need to be aware of any data that might

expose individuals or put them at greater risk, and being prepared not to use such data, thus requiring a greater degree of caution and compromise on the part of the researcher than might otherwise be needed.

Importantly, alongside anonymity, issues of authorship and ownership were addressed and agreed with participants at the beginning of the project. The agreed approach was based on an assumption of shared copyright between Katy Jenkins and the individual photographer (Booth and Booth, 2003; Guillemin and Drew, 2010), with both parties (and the women's organisations) having the right to use the images in the future, and any use of the images crediting both the research project and the individual photographer.

**4. Maintaining Access and Negotiating Activist Agendas**

Robinson (2011) theorises that the tangible outcomes of participatory photography projects encourage more active engagement by participants, and dedication to seeing the project through to completion. On the other hand, such projects also demand more sustained involvement from participants, compared to, for example, a one-off interview.[11] As Clark (2008) highlights, even within engaging projects, it can be challenging to keep everyone up to date and in contact, and people may drift away, especially when the project is carried out over a longer period of time. As noted above, the relatively long time-span of this project (three months of active photo-taking) made it challenging to keep participants on board, especially as neither Katy Jenkins or Inge Boudewijn were based in Cajamarca during this time. Regular meetings and communications between participants and the Peru-based project RA were essential in keeping the project on course, and keeping the women motivated – reminding them of that month's theme for taking photos, and encouraging them to reflect on the photos they had taken. Despite several women not being able to complete a full three months of photo-taking, all twelve women remained involved until the end of the project,

[11] See also Jenkins et al. (in press).

maintaining a commitment both to the research and to representing their organisations in the project, suggesting that it was perceived by them as a worthwhile undertaking.

The final exhibition, which took place six months after the active photo-taking phase of the research, also provided an important focal point for the women's continued involvement, enabling them to claim civic space for their perspectives, in a context of shrinking opportunities for their voices to be heard in these spaces (Amnesty International, 2017). The exhibition was held on International Women's Day 2018 along the main pedestrianised street in Cajamarca, before moving to an exhibition space in the *Casa de Cultura* where it was exhibited for a week in association with the regional office of the Ministry of Culture. The exhibition attracted journalists, local government workers, social movement activists, and the general public, giving the women an opportunity to showcase their work and perspectives in a public forum.

Killari (research participant): For us, the project has an important impact, and is even reaching journalists, and no organisation had previously had the idea of a project like this, having women take photos ourselves of our daily lives, and exhibit them.

Katy Jenkins: And is it important that it is women doing this?

Killari: Yes, it's important that it's women, and I think the most important thing about the project is that we have involved women of all different ages.

Yeni Cojal Rojas (research participant): I feel very proud... and the most important thing is that in spite of all the problems we are facing, we've been able to achieve this project, and we're here, looking at it now, and that's a triumph. For me this project shows that we're creating more points of resistance.

Fairey (2018) emphasises the importance of participatory photography projects being embedded within wider strategies for social change, and in this case, the research project became an extension of the women's activism, a mechanism to enable them to articulate their perspectives on mining and Development for a public audience, as well as to share them with new, otherwise inaccessible,

audiences – for example, in the global North, through subsequent exhibitions in the UK and Belgium, as well as online via the project website.

As mentioned above, in conducting research specifically with *activists*, it is likely that they will already have a clear idea of the message or agenda that they want to progress in relation to a given topic. Participants will usually have a certain audience in mind when taking their photos, involving actors such as the researcher, other participants, key stakeholders, and a wider public to whom the photos will eventually be displayed. As a result, it is likely that the photos they take will reflect the particular narrative or message they are hoping to communicate. The centrality of an activist agenda is therefore likely to give the research a slant that would be less likely to be present in research with non-activist individuals, at least in terms of the pre-existence of some degree of shared perspective amongst the participants. In this case, the shared perspective related to a common resistance to large-scale mining, and a shared experience of contesting existing and proposed mining projects in the region.[12] A commitment to a particular agenda also means that activists are perhaps more likely to maintain a commitment to the research, seeing it as part of a broader ongoing political and social project, as reflected in the comments of Ana, one of our participants:

> Ana (research participant): [The important thing] for me is that this reaches the furthest corners of the world, because this is what we want – that is, we don't want to stay silent or with our arms folded.

Their own ongoing activism has also meant that the women involved perceive a life for the photography project, outside the confines of the funded, time-bounded academic project, with several women maintaining contact with Katy Jenkins, and updating her on their activities, once the project had concluded. Below, Killari highlights this sense of commitment and the way in which the research was understood as embedded within an already existing, and ongoing, activist agenda:

[12] Although the women activists are united by their opposition to mining, there are divergent perspectives amongst them and their organisations, as regards both strategies and alternatives.

> Killari (research participant): And, as well, these materials will mean we can carry on spreading our message in other places. [….] Also the cameras, we are going to carry on taking photos and generating materials.

This reflects Fairey's assertion that: "When projects are embedded within wider movements seeking structural and systemic change, while participants may not be able to sustain their participation unsupported, their images can continue to play a role in making visible alternative narratives and stories, amplifying community voice, documenting concerns and imaging new futures." (Fairey, 2018, p.629).

This pre-existing activist agenda also shaped the ways in which participants 'owned' the project, and took it in directions that were not anticipated – a development which also seemed entirely in line with the participatory ethos of the project. Whilst working within the broad parameters of the themes we had collaboratively agreed, as the project progressed it became clear that the women were framing the project as a form of activism in itself, and in particular as a means of showcasing the cultural and natural richness and diversity of Cajamarca. The women explained to Katy Jenkins that the project enabled them to create an archive, a record of everything 'good' about Cajamarca, that they perceived as under threat from the continued expansion of large scale mining – the landscape captured by one of the participants in Fig. 1 provides a good example of how this approach manifested itself in the women's photography.

*Fig. 1 here 'Photo credits: Yeni Cojal Rojas/Women, Mining and Photography 2018'*

They thus envisaged that this would act as a form of evidence in the future, a way of 'proving' what had been destroyed, marshalling popular – though problematic – notions of photography as somehow objective and conveying an essential truth. Whilst at a slight tangent to the original aims of

the project, this archival approach still spoke to the thematic foci we had agreed at the outset, as the women developed a narrative around the Development possibilities that such richness provided, and the alternative (to mining) trajectories that could allow Cajamarca to prosper from its rich history and cultural heritage. This illustrates the way in which using photovoice gave the women participants more control over the research process and the focus of the research, than they would have had if more traditional qualitative methods had been used, as well as enabling them to articulate their perspectives and ideas over a period of time rather than simply a one-off interview.

Photography relies heavily on what is seen, raising questions about that which is not seen, or cannot be portrayed visually (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2014). In reflecting on the women's approach, which diverged from the project as originally conceived, it is thus important to consider what is absent from such a narrative. We argue that in seeking to celebrate Cajamarca, the women activists have produced a slightly 'rose-tinted glasses' perspective, one in which power dynamics, social inequalities and conflict are generally less evident than might be expected. Whilst this might be problematic if the research were more directly focused on understanding social conflicts around mining, it is perhaps less so in a context in which we explicitly sought to frame the project as one step removed from the conflict itself. Nevertheless, it is clear that the activists' pre-existing priorities, subjectivities and commitments have coalesced with the project foci to produce a very particular approach to the research, which we surmise would not be the case had we worked with non-activist participants whose perspectives might be less politicised.

At times both Katy Jenkins and the Peru-based RA felt uncertain as to the extent to which the women's photos responded directly to the agreed themes, and it was important to cede control to the participants here, recognising that the themes themselves were only intended to act as an initial stimulus for the participants' photo-taking activity, not an analytical frame. As the project progressed beyond the photo-taking stage, the themes themselves became less relevant, and the women's

narratives and interviews gave greater meaning and context to their photos. The interviews were essential in enabling Katy Jenkins to bridge the gap between the three themes originally agreed, and the final photos taken by the women. Through talking with participants they were able to articulate how their photos fitted with and spoke to the concerns of the project, in ways that otherwise would not have been clear from the photos alone (Thallon, 2004; Robinson, 2011). For example, an image of a man pulling a handcart loaded with provisions (Fig. 2) might have been interpreted as harking back to a simpler way of life, but in fact was taken by the participant as an illustration of her perspective that mining had not brought 'Development' to Cajamarca because people were still required to do the hard manual labour of pulling carts.

*Fig. 2 here – 'Photo credits: Blanca Tasilla Moqueira/Women, Mining and Photography 2018'*

It was also important to underline to participants that the meanings behind the photos were more important than how technically accomplished or aesthetically pleasing the images were, something we returned to on several occasions. Nevertheless, it was difficult to overcome both their, and indeed our own, tendency to gravitate towards selecting the more visually appealing photos, particularly in the context of curating the exhibition, thus also potentially further entrenching the rose-tinted glasses narrative of the women. The exhibition images typically captured a rural way of life (which was not the predominant way of life of many of the women themselves) and a sense of the natural abundance and productivity of the land, as exemplified in Fig. 3.

*Fig 3 here – 'Photo credits: Felicita Vasquez Huaman/Women, Mining and Photography 2018'*

Such a perspective very much reflects tropes used in anti-extractivist social movement activism more broadly, which often draw strategically on place-based ideas of heritage, 'tradition' and culture, and notions of indigeneity, to resist large-scale, industrialised resource extraction (Jenkins 2015). We also

recognise that these sorts of visually appealing images are much less confrontational than images directly depicting the negative consequences of mining, which could have placed the women in a more vulnerable position in terms of the public exhibition. Finally, it is also important to draw a contrast between the highly visible and public intervention of the exhibition which foregrounded the women's and the organisations' activist agenda and priorities, versus the less prominent or immediate academic outputs from the project, in which the activists' perspective is more mediated and where the focus is on critically *understanding* the activists' perspectives rather than simply transmitting them to win hearts and minds to the anti-mining campaign, giving scope to engage with a much broader range of images some of which were less picturesque - see for example Fig. 4, which the participant took to capture debates around changing water access and usage in Cajamarca city.

*Fig. 4 here – 'Photo credits: Liz/Women, Mining and Photography 2018'*

**5. Conclusion**

In the course of this research, we have found that photovoice presents significant opportunities for conducting meaningful research with activists, opening up spaces for the co-production of knowledge that foregrounds activists' perspectives, values and agendas. In this respect, we argue that it is important to cede a degree of control of such projects to ensure that they do indeed respond to the needs and priorities of participants, building a participatory approach into as much of the research as possible, not only the data collection. Such an approach does, however, require a delicate balancing act between the priorities of the research project and those of activists, in turn necessitating a significant investment of time and emotional energy from both researchers and participants. We suggest that the relatively long timescale usually involved in photovoice projects is also well served by working with individuals and organisations who are already socially and politically engaged and committed to furthering a particular agenda, increasing the likelihood of their participation being sustained over a longer period.

Whilst emphasising some of the particular ethical and methodological considerations around working with activists, especially in relation to the issues of naming and authorship, we argue that using photovoice with activists can be particularly productive, allowing them to articulate, and make publically visible, their perspectives in ways that are accessible to a variety of audiences in both the global North and South. Especially in contexts of socio-environmental conflict where women activists' voices have not always been prominent, or have been instrumentalised or highly mediated, the use of photovoice with women activists can be beneficial in enabling their perspectives to 'travel', and has an important role to play in bolstering their abilities to claim civic spaces for their voices to be heard, as well as building new skills and capacities. Finally, we underline the utility of photovoice in facilitating researchers to undertake research that supports activist agendas and avoids perpetuating extractivist research practices, through developing tangible resources to support often precarious activist organisations, and promoting longer term collaborations that respond to the needs and contexts of grassroots activists.

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