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Articulating Gender and Resource Extraction in Latin America

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Since the early 1990s, Latin America has witnessed a significant expansion in the scope and scale of large-scale extractive activity, inducing widespread social and environmental conflict (Bebbington 2012), producing new forms of political participation (Bonilla 2015; Svampa 2011; Arce 2014) and environmental governance at the national level (Bebbington et al. 2013; Arellano Yanguas 2011). New geographies of extraction have considerably altered pre-existing territorial configurations, producing important physical transformations and differential forms of access to natural resources (Burneo 2013 ; Ulloa 2020), and reconfiguring residents' experiences of place and territory (Li 2015; Romero Toledo et al. 2017). Material re-arrangements induced by extractive development entail deep transformations in social relations, resulting in new forms of social mobility, inclusion and exclusion (Bury 2004; Salas Carreño 2008), and reproducing and re-working social inequalities. However, the gender dimension of these processes has remained relatively under-explored (Bebbington 2015; Deonandan & Tatham 2016), despite women being increasingly visible actors in resource-related conflicts across Latin America, and playing an active role in community organising and in organisations contesting proposed and existing extractive projects across the region. Emerging research thus focuses on understanding women's responses to large-scale mining extraction, how and why they are contesting it, and the challenges they face in doing so (Jenkins, 2015, 2017; Grieco 2016, 2018 ; Lutz-Ley and Buechler, 2020).

Based on papers presented in the panel "Women, Activism and Resource extraction", organised for the 2018 Annual Conference of the Society of Latin American Studies (SLAS), this special section brings together work from scholars in International Development, Anthropology and Sociology, to better understand the subjectivities, responses and experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous women confronted with extractive activities in Peru and Chile.

Inge Boudewijn's article focuses on how women's activism changes and becomes embedded in daily lives and activities, when conflict disappears from the spotlight. Since 2012, when widespread protest caused the suspension of the Minas Conga mining project, activists in Cajamarca (Peru) have turned to the challenge of imagining an alternative development for the region. While some advocate for sustainable forms of mining, others favour alternative development strategies or question the very notion of development as something desirable. Boudewijn's analysis shows how women mobilise gendered values, in order to imagine possible post-extractivist futures based on local history and personal experience.

The success of women's anti-mining activism in Peru over the last decade has largely depended on their ability to build strategic alliances between rural and indigenous women and urban and mestiza feminist movements. In her article, Johanna Leinius focuses on the convergence of distinct concerns and worldviews around a unifying discourse of "body as territory", which brings together feminist

claims for sexual and reproductive rights with indigenous demands for territorial autonomy. However, Leinius argues that something is lost in translation and, despite these alliances, the underlying asymmetric relations of power and privilege amongst rural indigenous and urban mestiza women remain fundamentally unchallenged.

In Chile, Anahy Gajardo explores how ethnicity has become a resource for Diaguita women in the face of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme of the Huasco Alto mining project. Gajardo's article shows how mining CSR has played a central role in reviving Diaguita culture, situating Diaguita women as the legitimate "custodians" of indigeneity. Gajardo argues that the women who benefit from CSR programmes in order to escape poverty and invisibility, feel implicitly compelled to support mining activities, a position which sets them against male-dominated Diaguita organisations opposed to mining. Indigenous women therefore find themselves in the ambiguous position of becoming the ideal subjects of Chilean neoliberal and multicultural development policies, at the same time as these policies are dividing the political and social fabric of their communities.

Resource extraction activities often extend over many years, and all of the contributions particularly foreground the changing nature of women's involvement with their communities, mining companies and anti-mining activism, the challenges they face in establishing new social and political alliances, and sustaining these over time. Together, the three papers provide rich empirical material to enable us to better understand the ways in which gender and ethnic identity are tightly imbricated in shaping the nature and course of natural resource conflicts and consensus.

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