

## *Gender, Large-scale Resource Extraction and Environmental Inequality in Latin America*

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### Abstract

A growing body of research and literature explores how women are particularly affected by the social, environmental and economic impacts of large-scale natural resource extraction. Furthermore, these environmental inequalities disproportionately affect marginalized women; be it geographically, racially, and/or otherwise marginalized. This chapter provides an overview of contemporary research into gendered aspects of environmental inequalities, in the context of large-scale resource extraction, and through exploring key theoretical concepts associated with Feminist Political Ecology and Latin American feminisms. We offer a detailed case study on the gendered impacts of large-scale mining in Latin America, drawing upon a range of research projects we have been involved in, highlighting how women often face more, and more severe, impacts of large-scale natural resource extraction as compared to men, across social, economic, and environmental spheres. Finally, we offer some suggestions for areas of future research.

### Keywords

Natural Resource Extraction, Gendered Inequalities, Women, Environmental Inequalities, Latin America, Feminist Political Ecology

### Introduction

In this chapter, we critically explore why gender is an essential factor in fully appreciating how large-scale resource extraction and environmental inequality intersect in the context of Latin America. While the impacts of large-scale extraction are experienced by both men and women, including in gendered ways, in this chapter we outline the varied and extensive ways in which environmental inequalities are felt and experienced by women in particular, especially those living in rural and resource poor contexts, and explore key conceptual literature that enables us to better understand the gendered - and also racialized - nature of such inequalities. We critically analyze the key aspects of gendered environmental inequality, drawing upon a range of research projects we have been involved in, as well as other key studies carried out in the region.

Below, we begin by setting out the history and context of large-scale resource extraction activities in Latin America, recognizing the wide range of activities that come under this banner and considering the colonial and postcolonial histories that have been, and continue to be, fundamental in shaping the inequalities that are produced through these activities. We then provide an overview of key theoretical ideas from Feminist Political Ecology and Latin American feminisms, that help us to conceptualize why gender is a crucial factor in making sense of the impacts of these activities. We then explore a case study on the gendered inequalities produced by large-scale mining, particularly drawing on research each of us have undertaken in the Andes.

The gendered impacts and implications of large-scale resource extraction have been the subject of a growing academic and practitioner literature across the global South, especially in Asia and Africa. However, despite growing attention to these concerns in Latin America, research here has been less visible, especially in the anglophone literature, and much remains to be understood. With this in mind, we aim to highlight key contemporary research in this area, as well as outline areas for further research.

## Large scale resource extraction in Latin America

Latin America is a region of great inequalities (Acosta, 2013); in relation to natural resource extraction in particular, it has been home to a range of high-profile conflicts over mining, oil, deforestation and hydroelectric energy. Some emblematic conflicts include the Ralco dam in Chile (e.g. Nesti, 2002); the Conga mining project in Peru (e.g. Paredes Peñafiel and Li, 2019); the struggle of the indigenous Cofan people against oil extraction in Ecuador (e.g. Cepek, 2016); the ecological degradation and deforestation as a result of the TIPNIS highway in Bolivia (e.g. Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2018). In this section, we provide an overview of natural resource extraction in Latin America, which takes a wide range of shapes and forms. Based on our own backgrounds and expertise, we particularly examine large scale resource extraction and mining, while also highlighting the impacts of oil extraction and deforestation. This provides a context through which to explore our case study on the gendered impacts of mining later in the chapter.

Latin America is home to a vast range of natural resources, including oil and gas, timber, and mineral deposits, including copper, silver, gold and zinc (Alimonda, 2015; Pendrill et al., 2019). International investments in mining, oil extraction and forestry have significantly increased across the region over the last decades. In the case of forestry, timber production has seen substantial growth in Latin America between 1960-2020, at a higher rate than other parts of the world (Sohngen, 2020). Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, in particular, are found in the FAO's 2020 Global Forest Resources Assessment's top ten of countries with the highest rates of deforestation. Aside from timber production, deforestation is driven by land changes related to agriculture and cattle grazing, biomass production, palm oil, mining, urbanization, infrastructure expansion, and to clear land to make room for increased agriculture and cattle grazing (Geist & Lambin, 2002; Gibbs et al., 2016; Pendrill et al., 2019; Sohngen, 2020). In the case of mining and oil, investment has grown significantly since the 1990s (Manzano & Monaldi, 2009). In that decade, prices for many different minerals rose drastically, leading to extraction becoming a profitable endeavor in previously unexplored locations with low concentrations of minerals in the soil (Bridge, 2004). Excavating these low concentrations of minerals requires techniques such as large scale open-pit mining. The rapid growth of the number of proposed and realized open-pit mining sites worldwide, particularly in the global South, is a result of this so-called 'mining boom' (Bridge, 2004; Lust, 2014).

Demand for natural resources from Latin America is predominantly driven by the global North and China; similarly, the companies profiting from these activities are often based outside of Latin America (Gibbs et al., 2016; Lust, 2014; Pendrill et al., 2019). Nevertheless, extraction of these natural resources is still frequently argued to be a source of and/or route to economic development for Latin American countries (Pearson et al., 2017), and most recently has also been embraced by post-neoliberal governments in the region as a strategy for state-led development, so called 'neo-extractivism' (see, for example, Acosta, 2013; Gago & Mezzadra, 2017; Van Teijlingen, 2016; van Teijlingen & Fernández-Salvador, 2021; Villalba-Eguiluz & Etxano, 2017). In practice, however many resource-rich countries are among the world's poorest, a phenomenon sometimes explained by the concept of the 'resource curse'. This concept was first used by Auty (1993) to describe the observed phenomenon that small countries rich in natural resources and natural resource extraction saw less economic growth than small countries that were resource poor. This is thought to hold even more true in the case of countries dependent on the export of just one or few raw materials, especially when these materials are minerals or oil (Acosta, 2013). While the export of raw materials and natural resources can lead to an increased income at the national level, for example through increased tax revenue, this is not widely associated with economic or other forms of development for either local communities or countries as a whole in the long run. Instead, national and international inequalities are often reinforced, as economic benefits are held in one place (e.g. the capital

city) and/or in few hands (Acosta, 2013; Asif et al., 2020; Gudynas, 2013). Furthermore, while mining companies are diverse in size, methods of extraction and methods for dealing with local communities and the government (Ballard & Banks, 2003), they consistently tend to be the main 'winners' in mineral extraction, gathering most of the wealth, media support, and occasionally obtaining a position of power in the country in which they operate; either through threatening dependent governments or by securing government posts for personnel (Acosta, 2013). On top of this, the large-scale multinational companies conducting extraction often pay relatively little tax for their endeavors (Acosta, 2013; Lust, 2014). While the notion of a 'resource curse' remains contested (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2008), recent studies have observed the phenomenon in countries such as Pakistan and China (Asif et al., 2020; Guan et al., 2020). Arellano-Yanguas (2011), examining the effects of the resource curse in Peru, argues it is observed:

*...especially in countries with previously fragile political institutions, to generate both unexpectedly low rates of economic growth and a series of adverse effects on governance, including authoritarianism, militarisation, regional secessionism, and socioeconomic inequality. These outcomes are probable, not guarantee. (p.617).*

Some of the explanations that have been offered for this 'curse' are economic distortion as a result of the export boom; neglect of other economic sectors; political mismanagement; weak governance and corruption; and a decline of accountability and transparency of governments (Acosta, 2013; Arellano-Yanguas, 2011; Ballard & Banks, 2003; Holden & Jacobson, 2007; Mehlum et al., 2006).

Scholars have also criticized the pursuit of natural resource extraction to achieve 'development' as a continuation of European colonialism, motivated by the search for precious metals, and the associated modes of exploitation (e.g. Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2013; Lust, 2014; Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014). This situation further highlights how the extraction of natural resources contributes to increasing inequality not just within, but between countries. Furthermore, the extraction of natural resources is associated with a vast range of impacts on the natural and social environment, ecology and biodiversity. Mining, for example, is associated with putting high pressure on land and water, and having varied and extensive social and environmental impacts, including pollution, ground water depletion, release of dust and gases, decrease of social capital, and leading to displacement and forced migration (Brain, 2017; Bury, 2007; Caballero Espejo et al., 2018; Cronjé et al., 2013; Lust, 2014; Narrei & Osanloo, 2015; Sonter et al., 2018). Beyond local damage, mining also contributes to international and global environmental degradation, including through the pollution of river and oceanic systems, fish stocks, and rainforests, and leads to high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change (Akcil & Koldas, 2006; Gudynas, 2013; Moore & Luoma, 1990; Mudd, 2010; Norgate et al., 2007; Norgate & Haque, 2010; Salomons, 1995)<sup>1</sup>. Finally, mining is also associated with large-scale environmental disasters, e.g. dam breakages in Brazil in 2015 and 2019, the impacts of which can also extend worldwide (Sullivan & de Freitas Paes, 2019).

Given the increased inequality and socio-environmental impacts arising from these activities, it is perhaps not surprising that, as natural resource extraction has increased in intensity and extensity across Latin America, many countries have seen conflicts over territorial, indigenous and environmental rights, often focusing on human rights, water and land (Arellano-Yanguas, 2011; Bebbington et al., 2008; Boudewijn, 2021; Bury, 2002; Jenkins, 2014<sup>a</sup>; Li, 2009b; Rasch, 2012; Urkidi, 2010; Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014; Yagenova & Garcia, 2009). Worldwide, natural resource extraction often occurs on land occupied by indigenous people, particularly affecting their environment, livelihoods and ways of living. It is no surprise

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly, high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and loss of biodiversity are associated with deforestation in the global South (Pendrill et al., 2019; Poffenberger & Smith-Hansen, 2009).

then, that indigenous peoples are at the forefront of much resistance against natural resource extraction (Åhrén, 2014; Bebbington, 2010; Dore, 2016; Gilberthorpe & Hilson, 2014; Romero Toledo et al., 2017). As Veltmeyer & Petras (2014) note, with regards to mining-related natural resource extraction:

*These conflicts, and associated pressures and struggles, pit peasant and indigenous movements against agents of global capital, and more often than not against nation states in which the extractive activities and indigenous communities are located. In this situation, the indigenous and peasant communities [...] are confronting forces and conditions leading to the dispossession of their lands, the loss of livelihoods, the pillage and looting of their subsoil resources, the degradations of the environment and their habitat, and also the privatisation, commodification and pollution of the water on which their livelihoods, health and well-being, not to mention life itself, depend. (pp.1-2)*

Later in the chapter, we use the case study example of the gendered impacts of mining-related extractivism, and women's resistance to this type of natural resource extraction, to explore the multiple intersections of gender, natural resources, and inequality. First, we turn our attention to a theoretical framework for conceptualizing gender and environmental inequality.

## Conceptualizing gender and environmental inequalities

In this section, we explore the crucial contribution of Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) to inform our critical analysis of the ways in which environmental inequalities are gendered. We then engage with more recent theorizing, predominantly from Latin American feminist scholars, that has deepened our collective understanding of the ways in which women – and especially poor, racialized women – negotiate the myriad impacts of large-scale resource extraction, as well as their increasingly vocal role at the forefront of resistance to these impacts and associated entrenched inequalities.

### Feminist Political Ecology

The discipline of Political Ecology focuses on access to, control of, and decision-making over natural resources and the environment, recognizing that “*decisions about the environment are not politically neutral*” (Rocheleau et al., 1996, p.15). While the roots of Political Ecology are usually situated within the global North and the Anglophone academy, the discipline is much more diverse than this, and has been embraced, extended and significantly developed by scholars from across the global South (Bridge et al., 2015; Loftus, 2019; Pendrill et al., 2019). Latin American scholars, in particular, have been at the forefront of developing this field, with Political Ecology especially visible in relation to debates around livelihoods, control over natural resources, socio-environmental conflicts and environmental degradation in Latin America (Alimonda, 2015; Arriagada Oyarzún & Zambra Álvarez, 2019; Escobar, 2006; Leff, 2015; Ulloa, 2015). For example, Gonzalez Hidalgo et al. (2019), bring to the fore the role of emotion, proposing emotional political ecologies as an analytical lens for understanding extractive conflicts, in this case in relation to Mapuche territories confronting large scale forestry projects in Southern Chile.

Political ecologists have also explored how colonialism and neoliberalism have pushed many communities to the margins, especially those relying on the natural environment for their livelihood (Bryant, 1998; de Haan, 2012). At the heart of Political Ecology, then, is a critical exploration of the diverse ways in which the political economy affects the livelihood decisions and natural resource strategies of communities (Bury, 2002), emphasizing politics as the main factor in environmental degradation, through interactions between people and their environment (Bryant, 1998). These politics often entail unequal power

relations, locally and globally, which may enable one actor to control the environment of another (Bryant, 1998; de Haan, 2012). In seeking to understand these unequal power relations – and ultimately to transform them – Bridge et al. (2015) emphasize that, above all, political ecology takes a critical approach to knowledge production. They characterize the diverse scholarship that comes under the umbrella of political ecology as being “*an epistemological project, which sets out to shatter comfortable and simplistic ‘truths’ about the relationship between society and its natural environment*” (p.5) and, especially in the global South, a project that forms part of a broader political agenda aimed at decolonization and emancipation:

*Political ecology is an explicitly normative intellectual project, which has from its beginning highlighted the struggles, interests, and plight of marginalized populations: peasants, indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, women, the poor.* (Bridge et al. 2015, p8)

Importantly, Ulloa (2015) emphasizes the way in which, in the context of the predominance of extractivist development strategies across the region, political ecologist theorizing from Latin America has foregrounded an interrogation of (alternative) ways of understanding development that particularly emphasize the perspectives and knowledge of indigenous peoples, peasants and Afro-descendant communities – “*ways of being and living in a specific territory*” (Ulloa, 2015, p.321), highlighting the way in which political ecology enables “*analysis of concrete situations of local contexts, inequalities, lack of recognition [of indigenous and Afro communities and their territories], and territorial fragmentation*” (p.329).

While political ecology in general highlights the need for ecological justice and adverse conditions faced by marginalized people, the role of gender has not always been given adequate attention in the literature. As a result, a specifically *feminist* political ecology (FPE) has emerged focusing on gender as a crucial factor for understanding environmental inequities and potential transformation (Hovorka, 2006). In their ground-breaking book, Rocheleau et al. (1996) examine how gender, power relations, and local and global change, shape and are shaped by lived experiences, stating the goal of FPE is to “*understand and interpret local experience in the context of global processes of environmental and economic change*” (p.4). It has now become widely recognized that social, political and environmental struggles do not only take place through protests out in the open, but simultaneously occur at the local, household and everyday level (Boudewijn, 2020; Cruz Hernández, 2020; Jenkins, 2017), as well as at the level of the body (Allen, 2020; Harcourt & Nelson, 2015). While ‘standard’ political ecology often focuses on global power relationships, the FPE framework may be used to address day to day realities of resource inequality, by using gender, class and other social power relations to analyze how practices are produced at different scales (Bryant, 1998; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Truelove, 2011). Importantly, Elmhirst (2015) recognizes that many contributions to these debates do not necessarily label themselves as FPE, but nevertheless contribute to understanding the myriad ways in which gendered assumptions, inequalities and structures pervade environmental decision-making, access to natural resources, and environmental inequalities. FPE and FPE-inspired approaches foreground the importance of considering the gendered nature of forms of knowledge production, representation and social constructs in relation to environmental inequalities (Truelove, 2011). For example, Sultana (2011) notes that gender is negotiated through power relations, which shape struggles over natural resources, whilst Truelove (2011) addresses the small-scale politics of access to natural resources by examining how access to natural resources relies not so much on a person’s direct interaction with the environment, but rather on their position and relationships within the household and the community.

Although it is now 25 years since Rocheleau et al. (1996) seminal work on FPE, it is particularly striking that many of the same tensions and inequalities persist, and gendered environmental inequalities remain relatively invisible, and little explored beyond feminist scholarship. Thus FPE-inspired approaches continue to demand that we consider the ways in which women's distinct socially ascribed roles in relation to reproduction and production produce particular relationships with the environment, and a particular exposure to environmental harms and inequalities (Elmhirst, 2015).<sup>2</sup> Such concerns are notably taken up in recent work by Latin American decolonial feminist scholars, as we now go on to explore.

### Recent Latin American feminist/decolonial thinking

Latin American decolonial feminist thinkers provide important conceptual frameworks for understanding enduring gendered and racialized environmental inequalities. This crucial body of work begins from the understanding that extractivist capitalism as a development model represents the persistence and deepening of a set of colonial practices that are also gendered, classist and racist (Moreano Venegas & van Teijlingen, 2021; Rodríguez Fernández, 2020; Silveira et al., 2017; Ulloa, 2016). Bolados García & Sánchez Cuevas (2017) explore how ecofeminist ideas have become particularly relevant in Latin America, as women have collectively organized to contest large-scale resource extraction and its impacts, emphasizing the multiple forms of violence experienced by women living within so-called '*zonas de sacrificio*' (sacrificial zones), in contexts of resource extraction. They highlight the centrality of an ethics of care in relation to conceptualizing women's responses to extractivism, shedding light on women's everyday and embodied experiences of contamination, in this case in relation to communities impacted by extraction in Valparaíso, Chile.<sup>3</sup> Similar concerns are highlighted by Rodríguez Aguilera (2021), who foregrounds emotion in her work on gendered environmental racism in Oaxaca, Mexico: "*My main question during my fieldwork was, What did the people from the community feel when they saw the lagoons slowly dying? Each one of the women answered with sadness, anguish, anger, and nostalgia. Some of them felt sadness at seeing the lagoons progressively dying in front of their eyes. Others felt anguish and thought they could not do anything to stop the lagoons from dying. Many felt anger because the government has not done anything to resolve the situation.*" (p.4)

Svampa (2015) provides a detailed discussion of the ways in which ideas of ecofeminism have gained traction and relevance in the Latin American context, emphasizing the particular relevance of '*ecofeminismo de la supervivencia*' (ecofeminism of survival) – reflecting the gendered roles assumed by women that we go on to discuss below – and the importance of avoiding essentializing the relationship between women and nature. Above all, Svampa (2015) underlines the vital contribution of ecofeminism in terms of "*a vision of social needs, stemming not from lack or misery, but from [a starting point in] rescuing a culture of care, as the central inspiration to think about an ecologically and socially sustainable society, through values such as reciprocity, cooperation and complementarity.*" (p.131, translation ours).

Other scholars have foregrounded the contribution of indigenous, Afro and communitarian feminisms (Cabnal, 2010; Paredes, 2010; Ulloa, 2016), as well as emphasizing the distinct ontologies that underpin Latin American conceptualizations of the embodied relationships between women and territory that influence how the impacts of extractivism are lived, felt and understood (Cruz Hernández, 2020; González-Hidalgo et al., 2019; Moreano Venegas & van Teijlingen, 2021; Rodríguez Castro, 2021; Zaragocin, 2018). In this regard, the RECLAMA research project (Harnessing Afro-Ecuadorian Women's Heritage),<sup>4</sup> with

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<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, large-scale extractivism is often associated with masculinities (as explored below) and patriarchal forms of societal reproduction (e.g. Buss et al, 2019; Svampa, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> This idea of sacrificial zones is further explored by authors including Silveira et al. (2017) and Svampa & Viale (2014).

<sup>4</sup> [proyectoreclama.wixsite.com/reclama](http://proyectoreclama.wixsite.com/reclama)

which we are both involved, takes a decolonial approach which aims to foreground Afro-descendant women's oral histories, narratives and practices (Francis et al., 2021). This research explores the ways in which oral histories and storytelling provide a form of resistance to these histories and presents of dispossession, devaluation, deterritorialization and marginalization, linked particularly to large-scale resource extraction, in the context of Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

The concept of *cuerpo-territorio* (body-territory), and the methodological practices that flow from this (see, for example, Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo (2017)), are also key to critical decolonial approaches to gender and extractivism: "*Cuerpo-territorio can be conceptually defined as the inseparable ontological relationship between body and territory: What is experienced by the body is simultaneously experienced by territory in a codependent relationship.*" (Zaragocin & Caretta, 2021, p.1504)

As Moreano Venegas & van Teijlingen (2021) discuss, *cuerpo-territorio* enables an appreciation of the ways in which bodily integrity and territorial integrity are interlinked in struggles against extractivism in Latin America, as well as an emphasis on the gendered nature of this embodiment, particularly in relation to the violence that is perpetrated in the context of large-scale resource extraction (themes also addressed by Leinius (2021) in the context of Peru, and Rodríguez Castro (2021) in the context of Colombia).<sup>5</sup> Moreano Venegas & van Teijlingen (2021) draw attention to the ways in which "*[i]n the context of the advance of extractive capitalism across Latin America, violence is a vehicle for the capitalist production of space.*" (p.77). They discuss the distinct ways in which men and women experience violence, criminalization and dispossession in relation to extractive conflicts, focusing on the example of Shuar communities in Southern Ecuador resisting the arrival of large-scale mining to underline the gendered ways in which violence is used both against environmental defenders and against communities more broadly. In emphasizing the importance of foregrounding emotion, Latin American scholars have also specifically used the ontological concept of '*sentipensar*' – feeling-thinking – in constructing decolonial feminist analyses of the gendered and racialized impacts and lived experiences of large-scale resource extraction and territorial dispossession in the region (González-Hidalgo et al., 2019; Rodríguez Castro, 2021). Relatedly, decolonial scholars draw on Berlant's (2007) concept of 'slow death' to critique the ways in which racialized communities are abandoned by the state in pursuit of capitalist strategies of resource extraction and accumulation (Moreno Parra, 2019; Rodríguez Aguilera, 2021; Zaragocin, 2020).

### Large-scale mining, gender and environmental inequality

As the problems associated with natural resource extraction have become increasingly documented, so have its impacts on women. In this section, we use the example of large-scale mining to highlight the gendered inequalities associated with large-scale resource extraction, echoing Ulloa's (2016) assertion that out of all types of resource extraction "*mining evidences the most profound gender inequalities, exacerbating socio-environmental, economic, labour and political inequalities; increasing levels of violence against women; producing irreversible changes in territories and in visions of local territories, and affecting the ways of life of both men and women*" (p.124, our translation). These include impacts on their physical and mental health, time, financial situation, as well as impacts on gender roles and how these are perceived and valued within communities and countries (see for example Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Eftimie et al., 2009; Jenkins, 2014b, 2017; Jenkins & Rondón, 2015; Kalluri & Seema Mundoli, 2010, 2013; Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Macintyre, 2002, 2011; Rondón, 2009). While such gendered impacts of mining are

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<sup>5</sup> Theorisation of *cuerpo-territorio* is further expanded by Zaragocin (2018) drawing on Panez Pinto (2017), to conceptualise aquatic spaces within this discussion, expressed through the notion of *agua-cuerpo-territorio* (water-body-territory), a theme also developed by Rodríguez Aguilera (2021) and Ulloa (2020).

apparent in both the global North and global South, they are often aggravated in contexts of weak or oppressive state presence in the affected areas, offering little support and few opportunities for those whose livelihoods are negatively affected by mining (e.g. Bhanumathi, 2002; Carino, 2002).

We follow Sidorenko et al.'s (2020) definition of large-scale mining as: *“extraction from ore or mineral deposits by companies with substantial labour forces that are employed across large sites, working a deposit using (technologically) optimized approaches to develop economies of scale.”* (p.4) Large-scale mining is thereby opposed to small-scale and artisanal small-scale mining (ASM), which takes place on smaller scales, often with smaller ore deposits, and, particularly in the case of ASM, employing more labor intensive practices (Sidorenko et al., 2020).

In her article on feminist critiques of mining, Lahiri-Dutt (2012) identifies three main categories of impacts of mining on women; namely (1) women’s work and traditional roles, (2) gender inequalities in the economic benefits from mining activities, and (3) health and wellbeing. Below, we use this categorization to explore some of the most prominent gendered impacts of mining. We emphasize that while we highlight three main categories of gendered impacts of mining, these should be understood to be interrelated and overlapping. Furthermore, we note that not all women are in the same position, and not all will suffer the same (or any) consequences. Women that find themselves in a socially disadvantaged position (e.g., poorer women, older women, women with disabilities, and women from ethnic and racialized minorities) are likely to suffer more negative impacts than women in a more privileged social position. This means there is a need for intersectional analysis when considering the impacts of any type of natural resource extraction on women, a point particularly taken up in our current research project, RECLAMA (Francis et al., 2021). Furthermore, and in the same vein, some women will suffer fewer impacts than some men. However, a key concern is that women are likely to suffer more negative impacts from large scale mining than men on average, and overall. Finally, in spite of the many negative impacts mining can have on communities in general and women in particular, we also emphasize the importance of not viewing or framing women solely as victims of natural resource extraction (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Mahy, 2011; Sinclair, 2021), and finish this section with a brief exploration of women’s resistance against mining expansion in Latin America.

### Impacts on women’s traditional work and roles

The first way in which Lahiri-Dutt (2012) describes the gendered impacts of mining is in relation to what she refers to as ‘women’s traditional work and roles’. Studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America have shown women are disproportionately affected by large scale mining due to their gendered responsibilities for the livelihoods of their household, which often include taking care of crops and livestock, providing food for their families, as well as care work and looking after any sick family members. Due in part to these responsibilities, they are likely to be the first to be affected when a large-scale mining project affects the quality and quantity of water and agricultural products (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Brain, 2017; Jenkins, 2014b; Rodriguez Fernandez, 2020; Ulloa, 2020). It is widely recognized in development theories that when ‘the system is shocked’ (i.e., in times of crises, changes or difficulties), dependency on women’s unpaid labor increases, as they take care of and/or try to compensate for dwindling resources. Often, women may be simultaneously expected to boost their paid labor to heighten the household’s viability, further increasing their burdens. This is why time constraints are widely recognized as gendered, and associated with women’s many responsibilities (Forstner, 2013; Hill et al., 2009; Razavi & Miller, 1995). Beyond the direct impacts on quality of water and soil, the gendered impacts of mining on women’s gendered roles, work and time can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:



1. When households lose their lands due to mining activities, they often receive either financial compensation, or new land. However, any money received is often not sufficient to obtain land of similar quality, and similarly, newly assigned plots are generally of a lower quality than the lost plots of land, forcing women to work harder for the same quantities and/or quality of crops (Ballard & Banks, 2003);
2. Mining may cause access to communal land to be lost, which is often used mainly by women for gathering water, medicinal plants, hunting and firewood collection. On top of this, compensation or alternatives for lost communal land are rarely or never offered, further pushing women subsistence farmers to have to work harder for potentially lower quantities and quality of food (Ballard & Banks, 2003; Jenkins, 2014b; Kachika et al., n.d.-b);
3. Relocation or displacement due to mining may also imply a higher demand on women's time, as they may be located further from the necessary natural resources, including water. Additionally, this may increase their health and safety risks (Carino, 2002; Kachika et al., n.d.-a; Ulloa, 2020);
4. Mining is frequently a cause of deforestation; women in the global South who rely on forest products to supplement their families' diets are often left without these resources. Furthermore, a rise in diseases associated with large-scale mining will result in a higher pressure on women to care for sick household members and gather medicinal plants (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Bhanumathi, 2002; Kachika et al., n.d.-a; Kitula, 2006);
5. Population growth due to mining-related migration may further increase demand for dwindling natural resources, which may have a gendered impact (Eftimie et al., 2009).

Taken together, this means women often need to work harder and travel further for crops, clean water, medicinal plants, firewood and other non-polluted food for their families once large-scale mining operations are established in their areas (Jenkins, 2014b; Kachika et al., n.d.-a; Simatauw, 2002; Ulloa, 2016). Furthermore, studies from across the global South have shown how in places where strict gender norms, expectations, responsibilities and duties are enforced, women's social position may become devalued and marginalized within communities. This is due in part to the strong association of mining with masculinities (see below). The pressure to hold families and communities together and reproduce cultural values can be considered another way in which mining increases the burdens shouldered by women, especially when their traditional power gets overridden by the influx of cash into communities, mainly available to men (Byford, 2002; Deonandan et al., 2017; see further below). When families are displaced, this may often lead to a further break in social and community bonds, and a diminishing of cultural values (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Hargreaves et al., n.d.; Macintyre, 2011).

#### Gender inequalities in benefits

The second type of gendered impact of mining relates to the lack of opportunities for women to access mining related monetary benefits; either in the form of employment or monetary compensation, an impact exacerbated by simultaneously often losing the ability to pursue their livelihood strategies in the way they were used to, as discussed before (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the masculinized view of 'the miner' that persists worldwide, available jobs in the mine are more likely to go to men (Buss et al., 2019; Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Mercier & Gier, 2007; Pugliese, 2021). In cases studied in both the global North and the global South, women who did find work in the mine reported high pressure, discrimination, sexism and sexual harassment at work, lower pay and more 'informal' roles than men, as well as high time demands due to their domestic responsibilities (Buss et al., 2019; Eftimie et al., 2009; Ibrahim et al., 2020; Lutz-Ley & Buechler, 2020; Macintyre, 2011; Pretorius & Blaauw, 2021; Stokes-Walters et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the case of large-scale mining in particular,

local populations that do find employment in the mine often do not receive the same wages as highly skilled laborers brought in from elsewhere by the mining company (Coxshall, 2010).

Another issue raised across the literature is the absence of women from mining negotiations. When indigenous and/or local populations are consulted, often too little attention is paid to women's representation, and in some cases, they may be absent completely; including in sites where they are present in anti-mining activism. In other cases, women reported being made to feel as if they were not important and their opinions were dismissed: a result of gendered power relations. These exclusions, either through absence or dismissals, mean women miss out on the opportunity to make their voices heard and have their needs acknowledged and addressed (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Eftimie et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2009; Li, 2009a; Macintyre, 2002; Morales, 2019; O'Faircheallaigh, 2012; Rondón, 2009). This is reflected in the finding that community development projects proposed by men are far more likely to be accepted than those proposed by women (Ward et al., 2011). Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt (2006) argue that the exclusion of women from negotiations directly affected the devaluation of their perceived cultural roles. However, it should also be noted that such meetings may often be merely a formality, and the power relations between large mining companies and local men are also very uneven (Kalluri & Seema Mundoli, 2010).

It is acknowledged across the literature that economic compensation and benefits for land and/or lost opportunities are more likely to be given to men, often perceived to be the 'head of the household' (Bebbington et al., 2013; Simatauw, 2002). In many cases, financial compensation and royalties have gone exclusively to male community members, with no further distribution to women (Bhanumathi, 2002; Byford, 2002; Deonandan et al., 2017). Of course, when women are absent from consultation opportunities, their needs are easier to overlook, but additional problems stem from the fact that women are rarely legal owners of land (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; RIMM, 2010). This may also increase inequality, women's economic dependency on men, and change existing gender relations (Deonandan et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2009; Lozeva & Marinova, 2010).

### Health/wellbeing

Whilst the health-related impacts of mining, on both men and women – and especially on mineworkers - have been extensively documented (Eisler, 2003; Weinberg, 2021), women may face higher levels of exposure to dangerous toxins and associated health risks, due to their intensive daily interaction with land, water and crops (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Deonandan et al., 2017; Kachika et al., n.d.-a). Pregnant women in particular may be vulnerable, especially near artisanal and small-scale gold and silver mining where ingestion of methylmercury traces in water can be harmful to fetuses. Increased rate of miscarriages and birth defects have been documented in mining affected communities in Costa Rica and India, amongst others (Hinton et al., 2003; Isla, 2002; Seema Mundoli, 2011). As mentioned above, women also tend to bear the brunt of caring for family members whose health is adversely affected by mining-related impacts (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006; Macleod, 2016).

Increased influxes of cash due to mining activity can lead to social changes in communities (Ballard & Banks, 2003; Deonandan et al., 2017; Macleod, 2016). As discussed previously, men are more likely to have access to these new sources of monetary income. In several societies in the global South, such as in Andean and Southeast Asian cultures, women manage the household budget as they are considered more trustworthy (Forstner, 2013; Kalluri & Seema Mundoli, 2013). However, when larger sums of money become available to men, and people become increasingly exposed to economic changes in society, such values may change. Increases in men's consumption of alcohol, gambling, cigarettes and prostitution are

well documented in mining communities where cash economies can rapidly overtake subsistence farming practices, accompanied by a rise in domestic and sexual violence and changes in sexual attitudes. This in turn has been documented to lead to an increase in cases of prostitution, debt, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and divorce (Bhanumathi, 2002; Boudewijn, 2020; Bury, 2002; Byford, 2002; Carino, 2002; Deonandan et al., 2017; Laureyns, 2014), all with profound impacts on women's physical and mental wellbeing. However, women's increased dependency on the income of their husbands means that in some cases they become less able to leave them. Women in mining areas who are seen as transgressing traditional gender roles run an increased risk of domestic and/or sexual violence and harassment (Bhanumathi, 2002; Ibrahim et al., 2020; Kalluri & Seema Mundoli, 2010; Pretorius & Blaauw, 2021; Seema Mundoli, 2011; Simatauw, 2002). These effects may be felt even more profoundly in post-conflict areas and countries, where violence against women may already be normalized to some extent (Jenkins, 2014b).

Given this context, the impact of mining on women's mental health is also an important concern. Increased workloads, a rise in diseases, potentially increased instances of domestic violence, loss of land, displacement, fear, lack of social networks and support and increased poverty are tremendous stress factors, and depression has been documented in women whose lives were affected by large-scale mining (Seema Mundoli, 2011; Sharma, 2010). Beyond the loss of land as a source of subsistence and income, for many indigenous and rural populations this means loss of a connection to their ancestry and traditional way of life, which may also be a mental stress factor (Caxaj et al., 2014; Cronjé et al., 2013; Jenkins, 2014b; Macdonald, 2002).

RIMM (2010) notes that all over the world, women affected by mining decide to migrate to urban centers or internationally, in order to pursue other livelihood strategies. Sometimes, women and children may face several displacements when they cannot find suitable new places to live, and often end up living in worse conditions than before they were displaced by mining activity, negatively affecting both their physical and mental health (Ahmad & Lahiri-Dutt, 2006). Unfortunately, the mental health aspect of mining-related impacts remains relatively under researched.

### Women's resistance to environmental inequality in the Andes

Our own respective research projects have focused on work with women activists involved in anti-mining movements in Peru and Ecuador (e.g. Boudewijn, 2020, 2021; Jenkins, 2014a, 2017; Jenkins & Boudewijn, 2020; Jenkins & Rondón, 2015). Our research builds on the work of authors exploring women's often under-recognized role at the forefront of Latin American social movements, including anti-mining movements (e.g. Grieco, 2016; Mercier & Gier, 2007; Rondón, 2009; Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993; Zanotti, 2013), as well as on research exploring how women 'legitimize' their participation in public activism through narratives of their roles as mothers, grandmothers, and protectors or future generations, employing gendered notions of motherhood and the private sphere (Franceschet et al., 2016; García Guadilla, 1993; Laurie, 2011; Stephen, 1997; Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993). As Jenkins (2014a) argues: *"rather than simply reinscribing traditional gendered roles, these narratives can be understood as performing a more symbolic and strategic role."* (p.448). Furthermore, women may relate their roles in activism to water, key to many socio-environmental movements, and often associated with 'the feminine' in Andean cultures, partly due to women's intensive daily interactions with it (Li, 2009b; Stensrud, 2016). Focusing on water, life, motherhood and caregiving - in other words, domains associated with the feminine - is widely considered to provide a degree of safety for women activists. This is important because while impacts of mining-related social conflict, such as criminalization and increased military presence, naturally have repercussions for both men and women (Caretta et al., 2020; Moreano Venegas

& van Teijlingen, 2021; Olarte, 2014; Svampa, 2013), these impacts affect women in particular ways, as they are often seen as transgressing gender roles when they participate in activism and demonstrate acts of resistance, which may trigger hostile responses informed by machismo (Rondón, 2009). Women activists often face greater barriers to activism than men: like men, they are vulnerable to violence, abuse, threats and criminalization, but on top of that, they are more vulnerable to gendered slurs, intimidation and defamation tactics, as well as gender-based violence. Furthermore, women also report facing sexism and marginalization within anti-mining movements themselves (Jenkins, 2014a; Laurie, 2011; Moreano Venegas & van Teijlingen, 2021). Even when invoking notions of the feminine to legitimize their participation in these protests, women are often considered to be transgressing gender roles in doing so, facing hostility as a result (Brain, 2017; Jenkins, 2014a; Mercier & Gier, 2007; Rondón, 2009), and our research reveals the intra-community, and even intra-family, divisions that emerge in this context (Jenkins, 2014a).

Our research also critically explores how the ways in which such narratives of motherhood, protecting life, and kinship with the Pachamama are prominent in women's explanations for their involvement in anti-mining movements, reflecting broader discussions on notions of everyday resistance (Caretta & Zaragocin, 2020; Rodriguez Fernandez, 2020; Zanotti, 2013). Indeed, our respective research finds that these everyday forms of resistance may be considered by women as more important than the periods of large, visible mobilizations (Boudewijn, 2020; Jenkins, 2017). Finally, our research also foregrounds how women anti-mining activists in Peru and Ecuador, both those who self-identify as indigenous and those who do not, evince strongly placed-based narratives that emphasize their particular connections to the land, and the ways in which such connections are sustained across generations. Such narratives provide powerful counterpoints to notions of 'progress' premised on environmental destruction. We therefore argue for the importance of exploring women's visions of alternative development trajectories not rooted in extractivist approaches, in order to understand how gender – as well as race and other aspects of identity – shape women's perspectives on, and experiences of, environmental inequalities, whilst also providing ways of addressing these inequalities (Boudewijn, 2020, 2021; Jenkins, 2014a, 2017; Jenkins & Boudewijn, 2020).

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we provide a critical analysis of the many and varied ways in which gendered environmental inequalities are manifested, and why this matters, focusing on the context of large-scale natural resource extraction in Latin America. We have outlined the environmental as well as social impacts of this type of extraction, emphasizing the growing inequalities associated with accelerated growth of natural resource extraction, particularly large-scale mining, in the region over the last decades. In this context, the chapter emphasizes the need to pay careful attention to the ways in which gender, race and other aspects of identity influence the nature and experience of environmental inequality in contexts of large-scale natural resource extraction, drawing particularly on insights from feminist political ecology and Latin American decolonial feminisms.

The example of large-scale mining allowed us to explore the social, environmental, political, economic and physical ways in which women may be impacted differently than men by natural resource extraction. The case study thereby provides an especially stark lens for understanding the multiple ways in which gender, resource extraction and environmental inequalities intersect. However, we emphasize that women are not simply passive victims of these processes and structures, but are actively involved in resisting and challenging environmental inequalities in their communities, and contesting the systems and structures that enable these inequalities to persist at local and global levels. We highlight the importance

of developing fine-grained analyses of women's experiences of living with, and contesting, large-scale resource extraction in resource poor and marginalized communities across Latin America – and the global South – as well as signaling the need for greater attention to intersecting gendered and racialized power relations and the colonial structures that underpin extractivist development strategies, particularly through foregrounding Latin American decolonial feminist approaches. Such approaches are vital, not only for developing a more thorough and nuanced consideration of the extensive impacts of environmental inequalities, but also for understanding the myriad ways in which these deep-rooted environmental inequalities are being contested and may be tackled.

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