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Peasant women and the gendered inequalities in the industry of mining

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Peasant women and the gendered inequalities in the industry of mining

Abstract: The mining industry in Peru – as well as in many resource-rich countries of the global South – is of great economic and social importance, particularly in remote regions where mineral deposits are often located. The academic literature has so far neglected analysing how women in these regions are affected by the industry. As such, it is relevant to study the gendered conflict surrounding the activity and invisibility of women in the mining industry, as well as their proposals, demands, and needs, with a focus on environmental and social concerns. This study analysed the experiences of peasant women from Peruvian Andes communities in environmental governance processes in mining contexts as they sought to exercise their citizenship within the mining industry and public spaces. Using a qualitative approach involving a focus group and panel discussions, the experiences and perceptions of the women who are part of the participatory environmental monitoring and surveillance committees (PEMSC) were considered. This paper highlights gendered inequalities concerning the benefits of mining, the process of change in the social dynamics of mining communities, and political claims for a better social arrangement, with social, political, economic, and ecological considerations from the women's point of view.

Keywords: Mining; Mineral industries; Gender; Women; Gendered inequalities.

Mulheres camponesas e as inequidades de gênero na indústria de mineração

Resumo: A indústria de mineração no Peru – assim como em muitos países ricos em recursos do Sul global – é de grande importância econômica e social, particularmente em regiões remotas onde frequentemente estão localizados depósitos minerais. Até agora, a literatura acadêmica negligenciou a análise de como as mulheres nessas regiões são afetadas pela indústria. Assim, é relevante estudar o conflito de gênero em torno da atividade e invisibilidade das mulheres na mineração, bem como suas propostas, demandas e necessidades, com foco nas preocupações ambientais e sociais. Este estudo analisou as experiências de mulheres camponesas de comunidades andinas peruanas em processos de governança ambiental em contextos de mineração enquanto buscavam exercer sua cidadania dentro da indústria de mineração e espaços públicos. A partir de uma abordagem qualitativa envolvendo um grupo focal e painéis de discussão, foram consideradas as experiências e percepções das mulheres que integram os comitês participativos de monitoramento e vigilância ambiental (PEMSC). Este artigo destaca as desigualdades de gênero em relação aos benefícios da mineração, o processo de mudança na dinâmica social das comunidades mineradoras e as reivindicações políticas por um melhor arranjo social, com considerações sociais, políticas, econômicas e ecológicas do ponto de vista das mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Mineração; Indústrias minerais; Gênero; Mulheres; Desigualdades de gênero.

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Introduction

[...] I do not want you to interpret, at any moment, the story that I am going to report only as a personal problem (Viezzler, 1981, p. 13).

– If you'll let me talk, she said.

– Yes, that's fine. At the moment we are, perhaps the ideas of women may clarify something ... – He said it by laughing (Viezzler, 1981, p. 243).

The dialogue above is an excerpt from a personal narrative by Domitila Barrios, a woman who participated in social movements for women's rights in the mining regions of the Bolivian Andes in the 1970s. Although almost five decades have elapsed since the publication of the compilation and the history of her testimonies (Viezzler, 1981), some of the issues she raised remain current in women's claims and deserve greater academic prominence and business reflection. Gender inequalities that still hinder the social participation of women are present in the mining industry. This situation makes their expectations, needs, proposals, and demands invisible, both in terms of participation in the economic benefits and the environmental and social impacts of mining activity (Jenkins, 2014, 2015). After years of being portrayed as a typically male activity, mining is currently being transformed. A *feminization* process derived from several factors, including the increasing presence of large-scale mining projects in the global south, the rise of informal mines (also called ASM, artisanal and small-scale mining), and a growing number of social, political, and entrepreneurial initiatives have contributed to making the gender and mining debate a mainstream issue (Lahiri-Dutt, 2013, 2015).

In the peasant communities of the Peruvian Andes, women have limited opportunities for participating in the local political and public life except in contexts for which they perform socially attributed functions, such as food production, childcare, and other housekeeping tasks. Through government and civil society programmes designed to encourage women's participation in the political life of their communities, attempts have been made to reduce gender inequality and strengthen women's role as decision-makers in public spaces. However, the gender gap is still substantial (Catalán-Vázquez & Riojas-Rodríguez, 2015; Ulloa, 2016).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report on Women and Development in Mining in Peru points out that “the participation of women has been denied for many years in our country [Peru]” (UNDP, 2015, p. 1). Considering the economic and social importance of mining in Peru, as well as in many other resource-rich countries in the global South, consideration of the historical gendered inequalities related to mining and the invisibility of women is worthy of attention. It is crucial to describe and analyse how women's needs, proposals, and demands are invisible, and how women exercise their citizenship to create changes to enhance benefits and promote environmental governance and social development at the local level.

This study analysed the experiences of peasant women from communities in the Peruvian Andes in environmental governance processes within the mining context to determine how they exercise their citizenship in the mining industry and public spaces. The specific objectives were: to identify how women in indigenous and rural areas are invisible in contexts where mining activities take place and what strategies or actions women have undertaken to communicate their environmental and social concerns. The experiences and perceptions of the women who are community leaders and who take part in the participatory environmental monitoring and surveillance committees (PEMSC) were taken as reference.

Women and Mining

The absence of national and international regulatory frameworks is not the source of the gendered problems in Peru. The country is a signatory to several global gender and human rights conventions and statutes, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW – 1979 (Cole, 2016), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against

Women at Belém do Pará in 1994, and the Rome International Statute (2001). Furthermore, the Peruvian government endorsed the findings of the International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995. Based on these supranational regulations, the Peruvian State seeks to promote public policies in education, health, and the environment that take gender considerations into account.

The Equal Opportunities Act for Women and Men of 2007, which is part of Peru's Constitution, aims to guarantee women dignified living conditions, the recognition of their human rights, and the closing of gender gaps. However, after a decade of the act being in place, gaps still exist and negatively affect the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of women (Ulloa, 2016), all of which can be interpreted as different forms of violence against women. These forms of violence are a reality in the daily lives of Peruvian women, as they do not have proper access to healthcare and education, equal work opportunities, political participation, and citizenship (Centro de Derechos y Desarrollo, 2013). While it is true that women's rights in Peru are protected by a number of international and national regulatory frameworks promoting gender equality, a gap is identified in terms of protocols, guidelines, and action plans to ensure that women's rights are respected. Problems can be observed in the growing participation of women in the general context of mining, in their formal insertion in industry jobs, their informal participation in artisanal mines, the transformation of their rural and domestic activities, and their social roles after the arrival of large scale mining companies (Muchadenyika, 2015).

The discussed gender gaps are exacerbated in the context of mining, which can be identified in five key areas (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015): first, the discursive masculinity of mining, represented by the figure of the man conquering nature, portrayed as a hero, a dangerous character who has physical strength and needs to protect the biological functions of women, such as motherhood, from the oppressive environment of the mines (Mayes & Pini, 2014). This logic normalizes "man" as the typical miner. Second, mining is a gendered industry, with sexually segregated jobs, with women in hierarchically inferior positions (e.g. cleaning and catering) and with little or no recognition and no prospects for professional development and career progression. Third, a working-class struggle, which generally brings women who support their husband into solidarity with social movements that aim to improve working conditions and salary, or even as an activist, while such women still need to explain and legitimize her political voice (Jenkins, 2014). Fourth, gender roles in domestic and work settings tend to be determined by the maintenance of the domestic role of women and the breadwinner position of men. This stereotype helps industries to sustain a desired social stability, which consequently reduces female autonomy (Hall, 2001). Men and women perceive this stereotype as a pressure and a burden of male hegemony in the industry (Salinas & Román, 2014).

Arellano-Yanguas (2019) contributes to this debate in discussing the New Extractive Industries Strategy (NEIS), which is an attempt at governance that seeks a better distribution of revenues so that they are not centralized to national governments. Mining companies face local resistance because they fail to bring benefits to the local population where they are situated. Peru implemented NEIS to reduce local conflicts that threatened the expansion of the industry, assuming that "financial transfers would convince local populations and help to bypass the historical inability of the centralized Peruvian state to reach the rural areas of the country without reforming the public apparatus" (Arellano-Yanguas, 2019, p. 19). However, the strategy has failed to improve the condition of the population living close to mines and indeed has exacerbated local conflicts.

Keenan, Kemp, and Ramsay (2016) have argued that few industries change social, economic, and environmental contexts as rapidly as in the mining sector. Although the academic literature on these changes is extensive and diverse, it gives little attention to women, their experiences and perspectives, and how they are affected by extractive activity (Jenkins, 2014). The investigations mentioned in this literature start from community-level views, at the same level as agreements between businesses and localities, but disregard the fact that women's participation in these communities is hampered. They hold few positions of leadership or opportunities to have an active voice, little time for participation, training, and dedication in organizations of community interest, as well as having limited access to the benefits derived from mines (Keenan, Kemp, & Ramsay, 2016).

Given the dispersed literature on gender relations in mining, we take Jenkins' (2014) review for the discussion of this section. Jenkins brought together the various disciplines and topics that dealt with the theme and categorized them into four central issues: (a) women as mineworkers; (b) the gendered impacts of mining;

(c) changing gender relations and identities in mining communities; and (d) gendered inequalities and access to the benefits of mining. These central topics provide an overview of what is discussed in the context of women and mining. Women have faced various challenges in being recognized for their work in mines. The literature mainly addresses their role in ASM (Jenkins, 2014).

Women working as miners suffer from gender discrimination in the recruitment process. Furthermore, they do not occupy prominent positions in hierarchically or in terms of status. Although leading large-scale mining companies have made public commitments to create a more gender-balanced workplace – as in the case of BHP Billiton, which announced that by 2030 50% of the workforce will be women – women still play a marginal role and hold marginal jobs, although their physical abilities do not prevent them from performing all of the activities that informal mining demands, even at more significant environmental and health risks and in remote and hard-to-reach locations (Hilson, 2002). Formally, maternity is understood as a hindrance, but there is evidence of women working in ASM with their children tied behind their backs or taking their children to assist in extractive activity (Hinton, Hinton, & Veiga, 2006). There is also still the superstition about the participation of women in mines, which attributes lousy luck to their presence (Van Hoecke, 2006).

The reflection centred on women's participation in ASM may be associated with the conditions that make this their only viable economic option (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015). Jenkins (2014) found that women are led to participate in ASM in periods of drought, due to natural disasters or loss of land on which they are subsisting. On the other hand, their participation in ASM is also permeated by gender distances, such as when they are more likely to be involved in work if the extracted ore is of low value, such as salt, or when they are offered activities denied by men such as ore processing, which involves chemicals that are harmful to health (Hinton, Hinton, & Veiga, 2006). When discussing gender impacts on mining, Jenkins (2014, p. 333) argues that although the natural and social effects are well known (mainly environmental degradation), “women are disproportionately affected by many of the negative impacts of mining and that this is in many cases not well recognized or understood.”

Historically, mining is associated with having negative impacts on the availability, quantity, and quality of water needed for agriculture, domestic work, and other industrial activities. In extreme circumstances, as in the recent case of the Samarco (Brazil) and Mount Polley (Canada) tailings dam failures, water bodies and the natural environment can be severely impacted, resulting in high amounts of polluting waste (Kitula, 2006). Such environmental impacts can echo for decades in the locality, even after the closure of the mines (Veiga & Hinton, 2002).

The establishment of mining operations in underdeveloped and remote communities is directly linked with negative socio-economic impacts. The rapid and, in many cases, massive inflow of money and the migration of foreign workers have harmful consequences on the local culture and living conditions of the residents. Local inflation, an unskilled local labour force, stress on the local social services, prostitution, domestic violence, and an increase in substance abuse such as alcohol and other drugs have also been identified when new large-scale mining projects are developed (Kotsadam & Tolonen, 2016).

Concerning changes in gender and identity relations in mining communities, Jenkins (2014) identifies four specific topics: prostitution, economic and social status, women's organizations, and anti-industry activism. New mines result in very rapid economic changes, contributing to the replacement of a subsistence economy for other economic activities that seek to take advantage of the presence of significant foreign capital, which results in a change in community dynamics. This is seen in the case of the opening of bars and brothels to meet the demands of the large male labour force, which is usually not accompanied by wives or family (Laite, 2009). In artisanal gold mining camps, women are paid with ore to provide sexual services (Van Hoecke, 2006). Besides, when working in mines, women also offer sex as a compensation for male help in extractive activity (Benya, 2010), resulting in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, harassment, and sexual violence (Botha, 2016). There is inequality in the purchase of ore, because men receive more in the sale of gold, while women offer sexual services for money or additional gold to compensate for this difference (Hinton, Hinton, & Veiga, 2006).

Women's organizations and activism are a response to the perceived impact of the mining industry on communities, an impact which is seen differently by women (Jenkins, 2014). Women lose access to land that they once used for food production or suffer from their devaluation through economic transition, or the sudden change of social role when husbands become the sole financial providers of the household, causing women

to become more dependent and have less decision-making power. These changes also lead to an increase in the rates of domestic violence, when men are the sole direct beneficiaries of the money earned in mining, which has difficulty reaching women and children, besides being used for alcohol consumption and sexual services (Macintyre, 2006). Activism, as a social organized movement, derives from the perception of these conditions, and organizations have been formed by women who share these experiences and come together to seek better working conditions for themselves and their husbands and to reduce the gender impacts of mining (Jenkins, 2014; Li, 2009).

The argument that the mining sector generates jobs and yields economic benefits is very often the main point promoted by project proponents, governments, and many mining communities. While responsible mining companies strive to build local capacity so community members can work at mine sites, the majority of the jobs are in low-level positions. Furthermore, job opportunities are unevenly distributed gender-wise. Community consultation is becoming a common requirement for new mining projects, but it usually involves only men, who are the majority in representation in decision-making positions. Most often, companies ignore this female absence, and when women are present, men can inhibit the participation of women if it may interfere with their interests (Jenkins, 2014). In cases when women can participate and have a voice, or have the space available to exercise leadership positions, there are other impediments such as a lack of technical training, time, and negotiation skills, which make them feel incapable for the job (Salinas, Reyes, Romani, & Ziede, 2010). Ward and Strongman (2011) report that, in some contexts, women collect and administer their husband's wages to ensure household spending and domestic finances are appropriately managed. Some companies have accepted this situation, according to the authors, and pay a percentage of men's wages directly to their wives. In general terms, despite the problems presented, the extractive activity also benefits those who can take advantage of the opportunities of the changes, with the creation of small companies, agricultural production cooperatives, bars, small hotels, and shops (Fisher, 2007).

Methodological Procedures

This study is based on a qualitative approach combining the recording and analysis of the experiences, knowledge, and strategies of peasant women who took part in PEMSC and exerted leadership roles in the communities where they live. For the data collection stage, 16 women leaders from rural communities and that were involved in PEMSC were invited to participate in the conference "Gender, Mining and Water Resources: Interconnections, Challenges, and Future Outlook" held 16–17 February 2017, organized by the Canadian International Resources and Development Institute and the Escuela de Gobierno at the la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Carlier, Leon, & Xavier, 2017; Carlier & Xavier, 2017). The purpose of the conference was to create an opportunity for dialogue and reflection on issues related to gender and water management in the context of the extractive industry. The conference brought together representatives of civil society, NGOs, representatives of various government agencies (e.g. National Water Authority, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Energy and Mines, regional and municipal authorities), mining companies, international organizations, and academia.

Given the breadth of the theme, a series of thematic panels were organized. The panels, facilitated by experts, were divided into six main themes: gender, artisanal/small-scale mining, and water; the gender approach in the process of dialogue and conflict transformation; conflict and risk perception in water quality and health; views from the civil society perspective; social inclusion and income distribution of the extractive sector; and sustainable development, gender, and mining. On the margins of the conference, taking advantage of the fact that these 16 women, community leaders and members of PEMSC were in attendance, a focus group session was organized to understand how these women exercise their citizenship in environmental governance processes in spaces where mining activities take place.

To structure this research, the results are divided along two axes based on the type of data collection performed: (a) one with the narrative of a focus group carried out only with women leaders from rural communities and the presence of two moderators; and (b) the other with the results of the panel discussions whose topics were directly related to gender in the extractive industry and water resources management. To meet the objective of analysing the experiences of peasant women from Peruvian Andes communities

in environmental governance processes and mining contexts, it became necessary to bring these women together in a discussion environment, such as the focus group. The use of the focus group technique (Silva, Veloso, & Keating, 2014) was guided by (a) stimuli that brought to light situations that hinder and facilitate the participation of women in environmental governance processes in mining contexts; (b) identification of environmental concerns and undesired consequences resulting from the insertion of mining activity in the community; and (c) discussion of the establishment of PEMSC and the strategies adopted by women to create spaces for female participation. The focus group was conducted with 16 women and lasted approximately two hours on the second day of the conference; it was monitored and reported by one of the researchers of this study for later synthesis and analysis.

The entire qualitative process of data collection and analysis was guided by specific methodological guidelines that characterize this approach, a method of analysis that happens simultaneously throughout the study, following steps from pre-collection preparation to the final examination and writing of the article (Lindolf, 1995). This process involved a reduction of data from readings and re-readings, with due interpretations and final structuring in narrative synthesis, according to the results in the following section, with later connection with the literature, as presented in the discussion.

Results

The results are divided into two subsections, one synthesizing the focus group results and the other consider the panel discussion.

Focus Group Synthesis

The interviews resulting from the application of the focus group were transcribed and analysed from a narrative perspective, according to the technique developed by the facilitators. Four paper cards were delivered to all participating women, each in a different colour. Each colour represented a group guideline, and the participants were invited to complete the cards according to the facilitator's instructions. The "red" represented the problem situations – that is, the obstacles that women face in participating in the communities for work activities external to domestic activities and leadership. The "blue" indicates the actions that women adopt to address and overcome obstacles to their meaningful involvement in the communities. The "orange" presents what must be modified so that the women play a more protagonist role, mainly in the participation in committees. The "green" indicates the desires of women as community leaders for their locality and their concerns about water and mining issues. Following the return of the cards completed by the women leaders of the community, the facilitator debated each agenda and deepened the discussion on recurrent issues. Male chauvinism was general the most cited obstacle that limited women's participation in the community space. Deepening the discussion with the intent of specifying the problems, the matter of "time" as a problem was revealed.

Time! Let's see. It's a bit of thinking about all the people we work with in Cajamarca. I don't know if the idea is well understood, but the time is – the fact that, for example, the woman from Cajamarca has to take care of the animals; she has to sell the products of the farm. And above it, she has to see the children, and she has no time to stop (Woman 1 – individual story in the focus group).

Exactly, I see it here, too – multiple occupations. Not only are you saying that, but it's in different spaces. On the farm, at home, work (Woman 2 – individual story in the focus group).

For example, I work with communities. In the communities where I work, the meetings are at night because during the day it is impossible (Woman 3 – individual story in the focus group).

The issue of time was related to the multiple activities that women perform in their daily lives, and the number of hours necessary to complete those activities. Women look after the children and are responsible for animal care, as well as household chores. Furthermore, they commercialize handicrafts and the products of their manufacture. This heavy workload takes up most of their day and was presented as a reason hindering the exercise of leadership. If they needed to meet to discuss community affairs, the meetings would take place on the night shift, when possible. With this busy schedule, they lacked time to study, engage in professional development activities, or enjoy free time for fun and social activities, which they reported missing. To participate in events and other activities that required displacement between cities and their absence from household chores, they needed someone to substitute for them. They considered it a great sacrifice, because the other woman would take a double journey that day.

The community law was another obstacle, as it prevents women other than the wives of landowners from having the right to vote. This right is also overshadowed by the convenience of voting. As reported:

[...] What happens is that the law of the communities demands that only those in charge have a voice, so we do not have it, because in the communities the largest number of people that exist are women, who finally end up being the wives, not the right holders. The central board is led mostly by men, and when it does not suit them, they do not enforce the wife's vote. They do not always assert the wife's vote when the vote is not convenient. When it is strategic, when it is convenient, they use the wives and make the vote valid. This is management, because it is also established by the law of the communities (Woman 4 – Individual story in the focus group).

Male participation in high-level positions is higher than the number of women in equivalent positions, and one of the justifications is the criterion of convenience in using community law. The other criteria are related to the macho position of the leaders and the difficulty of reconciling the domestic and rural activities assigned to women when men work in the mines. However, when men leaders are younger, women report that such men are more open to change and invite women to vote and participate in the decision-making.

Water management is a common problem that requires transformation. Women perceive the changes in water quality and quantity, which are attributed to the mining activities in their communities and have a negative impact on their daily activities. They have reported that water sources have dried out and that sometimes they have to travel long distances to have access to potable water. Adding to the water problem, when the industry settles in a locality, food prices increase, and women feel more deprived have lower self-esteem, because their working conditions and salary do not change. What do these women desire? Peace – regarding social conflicts and gender inequalities; empowered women who can participate in communities; the right to an active voice; food production from animal and vegetable sources with fewer chemicals; mining having less of an influence; gender equality; and possibilities for different futures, primarily through access to knowledge and skills.

Panels Synthesis

The participation of women in the political life of their communities is remote and unsustainable, mainly because few women can hold positions in community organizations. It is unsustainable because, at any moment, women may be unable to continue exercising their citizenship in the public sphere. During the conference, leaders and experts discussed five significant issues that limit women's participation in the political life of their communities.

- **Mandatory nature of maternity:** In rural areas and, in particular, in the context of peasant communities, motherhood is perceived as a woman's highest achievement: it is the fulfilment of women's roles. Socially women are given a fundamentally reproductive role. In this sense, different women leaders pointed out that, to the extent that this belief does not change, women will not be able to plan when they become mothers, so it is not possible to decide on the phases or cycles that they wish to live throughout their lives, which undermines and limits women's participation in the political-community spheres. Furthermore, very often, women become mothers before the age of twenty, and in the Andean culture, it is expected that a woman should have two or more children. These early and recurrent pregnancies reinforce the exclusion of women from activities beyond motherhood.

- **Limitation of the gender quota in the statutes of peasant communities:** From the women community leaders and those who are part of PEMSC, the Peasant Communities Law encourages the participation of women. However, this is restricted by the statutes governing the actions of councils of peasant communities, while privileging the involvement of men as representatives of women.
- **Culture of gender inequality in the mining sector and participatory processes:** Despite the efforts of mining companies to promote gender equality through development projects and supporting women's involvement, the local culture is not conducive to fostering women's participation. While there are discourses that recognize the exclusion of women and their vulnerability, promoting practices aimed at empowering women, the cultural patterns and approach to gender equity are still limited.
- **Limitation of the roles of women in domestic and productive unpaid activities:** It has been pointed out that, in the Andean peasant communities, there is a "complementarity of gender roles". It is a social distribution of work and activities based on gender differences. However, this complementarity tends to favour women in taking a role in unpaid activities.
- **Overloading women with unpaid work:** When opportunities for women to work at the mines are created, typically two things result: they cannot engage steadily with jobs because complementarity privileges women's roles based on unpaid domestic and productive activities, or a situation of physical overload is generated that ends up affecting the women's health, as they have more activities without more support.

These five issues are part of the living conditions of women in local community spaces. These are challenges that prevent the participation of women in community political life in three senses. First, they can be decisive for women never being able to hold positions; second, they hinder the continuity of women's participation over time; and third, these issues are used by the male population to justify why women are unable and unfit to participate in political processes in the community.

Considering that discrimination against women has a cultural root, it was argued that gender equality awareness processes require a sophisticated approach targeting multiple actors. It was pointed out that the state is responsible for leading this process of change. When this happens, the private sector – specifically the mining sector – will adopt the proposed measures. At the conference, the presentations and discussions that considered the SDGs focused on SDG #5 – Gender Equality. The participants emphasized three points. The first was related to the low rates of hiring women from communities to work at mining operations, although it is recognized that when women are hired, they perform unskilled jobs. It was mentioned that wages for women are lower than those received by men when performing the same unskilled work, which is often justified by the argument that women tend to work less because of limited physical strength. Because they are employed in tasks culturally assigned for women, their labour rights are affected, and lower pay is awarded.

The second topic of discussion was about the usefulness of the SDGs in the context of any gender equity process in the mining contexts and water resource management planning. The SDGs framework could possibly contribute to advance the sustainable development agenda, help to improve gender equality, and contribute to the reduction of social conflict. The SDG framework could also facilitate dialogue and provide a basis for processes designed to make better use of natural resources (including water management) and promote gender equity. The third and last point emphasized in the SDG panel discussion revolved around the need to promote cultural change. It has been argued that a paternalistic logic still prevails in Peru, which is based on the concession of goods and services without generating citizenship and capacities, without overtly sexist attitudes. It hampers progress in terms of gender equality.

Discussion and Conclusion

Women are excluded from political spaces in peasant communities in Peru. The local culture privileges their reproductive function, and their role centred on the practice of unpaid domestic activities, including household chores, agriculture, and animal husbandry. This culture is reinforced by "a highly masculine industry [that] produces gendered political, economic and ecological impacts within the community that hosts it" (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015, p. 528). Despite Peru's commitment to international voluntary conventions and corporate policies that tend to take a more comprehensive view of gender issues in mining, unequal access to benefits and differential impacts for men and women in mining communities persist (Jenkins, 2014; Li, 2009).

In the context of mining activities, social elements that prevent the fulfilment of women's rights and that perpetuate discrimination are still present (Catalán-Vásquez & Riojas-Rodríguez, 2015). Although there are growing governmental, private, and civil society efforts to reduce the gender gap, historical and traditional practices are rooted in the local culture, making the process of change difficult and cumbersome. The traditional family model is prevalent in which the man is the head of the family and supports the household (male-breadwinner model), and the woman must take care of the house and the children (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015), which tends to disassociate women from the political and social spheres. The conditions to which women are subject also force them to maintain and reproduce this *status quo*, with few possibilities of ascent (Keenan, Kemp, & Ramsay, 2016; Salinas, Reyes, Romani, & Ziede, 2010, 2010).

Employing women in mining activities does not necessarily contribute to gender equity (Mayes & Pini, 2014). It can result in negative impacts on women's physical health and well-being, which is a result of a disproportional workload when, in addition to performing their work at the mines, they need to fulfil their obligations at home. Furthermore, wages are lower compared to those earned by men performing the same tasks. Arellano-Yanguas (2019) emphasizes this point and shows that there is a gap in Peru in the income of men and women that is influenced by the transfers that extractive companies make to the locations where they operate, which seems to be generated by an increase in investment in the construction sector, which is dominated by men. Artisanal and illegal mining – and in some cases, large mining – generates environmental impacts with adverse effects on the environment and the social climate. “Women are often the cheapest source of abundant labour in the labour-intensive processes of informal mining: they are often forced to work within severe constraints, at extremely poor wages, with little or no control over their work environment” (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015, p. 529), and ASM is often associated with child labour (Huesca Jr, 2013). This creates a high-risk scenario, which could give rise to social conflicts. While the state and business seek to reduce this risk and manage social conflicts, women and their specific needs remain hidden. Their social demands and those related to the environment are not known, nor do women participate in processes aimed at resolving conflicts that also affect them (Jenkins, 2014). Despite this, they participate in social movements and can play leadership roles during conflicts (Van Hoecke, 2006).

Informal and illicit markets accompany artisanal and illegal mining. One of them is the sexual exploitation of women (minors and adults), generated by the trafficking of women. The social changes accompanying mine facilities in the global South have led women to informal activities in small-scale mining and the sex trade (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015). These activities are forced, especially for women in rural areas, because they see no other means of survival when their subsistence production resources are increasingly scarce and the cost of living increases as part of the population is employed in the extractive industries (Hinton, Hinton, & Veiga, 2006). The inclusion of women in decision-making processes is, in principle, valued and encouraged by the state, mining companies, and civil society; however, it is a process that has been driven, fundamentally, by the women of the communities. It is hoped that the state will promote a process of change so that women's participation is greater and more enduring (Jenkins, 2014).

In conclusion, it should be noted that in Peru, as in other countries in the global South, women's problems in mining contexts and water governance respond to social and cultural issues that tend to make women invisible and violate their fundamental rights. Including the gender equity approach in public and daily politics is a priority task, because the gender approach is understood (for this work) as an ethical and analytical perspective that allows the observation and recognition of the existence of hierarchical and unequal relations between men and women.

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