Subjectivities of Struggle: Charting Inscriptions of Violence and Refusal on the “Cuerpo Territorio” of Peru’s Defensoras

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Subjectivities of Struggle: Charting Inscriptions of Violence and Refusal on the “Cuerpo Territorio” of Peru’s Defensoras

by

Natalia Guzmán Solano

In collaboration with the defensoras of Cajamarca

A dissertation presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2020
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>APRA</td>
<td>Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>DINOES</td>
<td>Dirección de Operaciones Especiales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FENMUCARINAP</td>
<td>Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Indígenas, Nativas y Asalariadas de Perú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOSPA</td>
<td>Foro Social Panamazonico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACHR</td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDL</td>
<td>Instituto de Defensa Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIDS/IILS</td>
<td>Instituto Internacional de Democracia y Sociedad / International Institute for Law and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INEI</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOC</td>
<td>Jóvenes Organizados de Celendín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Movimiento de Afirmación Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMUDEF PC</td>
<td>Organización de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama de Celendín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDTG</td>
<td>Programa Democracia y Transformación Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>Plataforma Interinstitucional de Celendín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUTEP</td>
<td>Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú</td>
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Acknowledgments

Firstly, an expression of gratitude to the ancestors: I fly on your wings. A deep thanks to the groundskeepers and housekeeping staff at Washington University in St. Louis, whose labor permitted me to think, write, and create in safe and clean spaces. I am especially thankful to Zena Mitchell and Sylvester Warmack who worked in McMillan Hall. I am grateful for the PhD program at Washington University for many reasons. Among them, and not the least, was for allowing me the time to grow an awareness about the gendered demands on academic cis-women in heterosexual partnerships who become mothers. The colleagues who chose to become mothers in their graduate trajectories, and those who will as academics, hold my heartfelt admiration.

I wish to thank my committee and all the faculty that I engaged with across the university. A Bret, mi profundo agradecimiento for the gentle guidance that allowed me to do whatever I wanted these past seven years.

My ancestors blessed with unfailing, supportive kin. I would not be here without you, mami, papi, Lizy, y Carlitos. And to the kin that we choose, thank you for being by my side. I am grateful for the friends near and far who have put up with me through this process. My heart hugs you, Carolyn, and Ashley—for keeping me sane with our long nights bringing down the patriarchy from our kitchen.

I am grateful for the kindness, generosity of spirit, and courage that the luchadoras of Cajamarca showed me. I hope everything I have done and will continue working toward is deserving of the love they shared with me. I return my love and appreciation.
A special thanks to the Olin Fellowship and the Graduate Fellowship at the Center for the Humanities.

Natalia Guzmán Solano

Washington University in St. Louis

May 2020
Dedicated to *mama*,

And to luchadorxs far and wide around the globe.
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Subjectivities of Struggle: Charting Inscriptions of Violence and Refusal on the “Cuerpo Territorio” of Peru’s Defensoras

by

Natalia Guzmán Solano

In collaboration with the defensoras of Cajamarca

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

Washington University in St. Louis, 2020

Professor Bret Gustafson, Chair

“Subjectivities of Struggle: Inscriptions of Violence and Refusal on the ‘Cuerpo Territorio’ of Peru’s Defensoras” calls into question the colonial assumptions underpinning contemporary understandings of extractivism. The sixteen months of ethnographic research I conducted with the defensoras (women ecoterritorial defenders) of Cajamarca is situated at the fraught extractive frontier where social conflict paralyzed the expansion of a large-scale mining project and generated a coalitional struggle against extractive-led economic development. This dissertation conceptualizes extractivism as a modern/colonial product of power and knowledge that has feminized the land and inhabitants from the time of the European invasion of the Americas. While recent research on mining and extractivism focuses on corporate-state-community relations and the materiality of “natural resources,” in this project I investigate how extractivism becomes inscribed on the cuerpo territorio (body-territory), a notion derived from Indigenous and Latin American feminisms which posits that the corporeal (human) body and geospatial territory are acted upon and subjugated by the same heteropatriarchal capitalist regimes of power. By treating the modalities of gendered state violence at the extractive frontier as
indicative of an “extractive security state,” this research reveals the operation of state techniques that intensify the reterritorialization of women’s bodies and the land. Within this context, defensoras nonetheless exercise agentive power within the sociopolitical conditions that have given shape to a masculine terrain of ecoterritorial politics in northern highland Peru. This dissertation argues that defensoras’ political praxis, including practices of autonomy and public leadership, enacts important critiques of capitalist patriarchy.
Prologue

A life history

Let me begin by telling you how I got here. In the Academy, this “who I am” and “where I’m coming from” means something in the production of this dissertation. My positionality inflected the ethnographic project I undertook in Peru, my relation to defensoras in Cajamarca, my entanglement in the politics of testimonio, and the broader politics of knowledge production in the discipline. First, I am existentially indebted to testimonios of The Latina Feminist Group. This group of scholars arose in the early 1990s with the goal of collaborating on Latina issues using feminist approaches. Through a series of meetings and working groups held during the 1990s, their purpose shifted to theorizing “latinidades feministas” (feminist Latin beingness) using testimonio as a primary method (The Latina Feminist Group 2001, 2). The group’s members were able to forge a methodological framework, with testimonio at its base, that deconstructed hierarchies of oppression and embraced a new knowledge-making paradigm founded on sorority and horizontality. Without the group’s published testimonios, I may not have reflected on how my self’s place within the Academy has been fundamental to the intellectual experience I have had while pursuing a graduate degree. Or, even, how to take better stock of the experiences I had before arriving at the doors of academia and why those experiences explain some, perhaps much, of what led me to those doors in the first place.

I decided to continue with advanced studies in anthropology as a dual Anthropology and French major during my senior year in college. It was my last year, and I was undertaking an
honors thesis project on the family dynamics of Colombian immigrants living in Queens, NY. I was certain I wanted to continue studying Anthropology. I loved the field. I loved how it had taught me to understand the diversity of human existence around me. In retrospect, a master’s degree would have been of benefit before deciding to pursue a doctorate. It also would have been useful to seek mentorship during my trajectory at the large, private university I was attending. I did not. I never learned about the significance of that guidance—the impact it could have, not only on my future, but also on my college experience. The influence of a mentor to discuss my expectations from a graduate degree, how to consider where to go, and what the process entailed would have been beneficial if only to help me make an informed choice. So, I arrived in St. Louis with fanciful dreams and barely a clue about what academic life was. To a certain extent, I paralleled my parents and other immigrant families who move to countries in the Global North expecting the best, but without comprehension of what life will be like on the other side. I had walked into a situation of not having the tools I needed because I didn’t know about (needing) those tools. Just as I had thought to myself in high school that I must not need college counseling because I was doing well, I said to my college self: “I’m doing fine,” so what’s the need?

The process of determining how and where to pursue a PhD was analogous to how I decided where to attend college. Applying to college had been a mystifying process. It was clear to me for years that I would attend college. I desired to go to college. My parents emigrated from Colombia in search of “better opportunities” for my two siblings and me. Coincidentally, I have always been studious and generally enjoyed school, so college was almost a foregone conclusion. Still, a wide gap exists between the goal of attending college and understanding the process for getting there. I recall starting to meet with a college counselor in my junior year of high school. We discussed the logistics of the process: success with standardized exams,
perusing through college requirements, submitting applications. We may have had one meeting that year, and a handful in the fall of my senior year. Yet the counseling was limited to that variety of technical questions. We never had a conversation about how to choose a school, aside from grade point average requirements. I didn’t understand that choosing a school involved much more than being competitive enough to be granted admission. What kind of fit would the school be for me? What did I prioritize in terms of a living and learning environment? Where would my intellectual growth, as a function of my personality and upbringing, be more apt to flourish?

In Colombia, my family had a middle-class life. My father had a bachelor’s in chemical engineering, and before we emigrated, he was employed by a multinational pharmaceutical corporation as a sales representative. My mother had been a secretary at a real estate firm. While my father came from a working-class background, my mother grew up in a middle-class family up until my grandfather died when she was fifteen years old. It was then when my grandmother’s mettle shone through. My mother says that had her father lived to old age, she may have been allowed to move to from Cartagena to Barranquilla to study medicine. Still, for a single, unemployed mother, my maternal grandmother succeeded in providing for my mother and her siblings. My grandmother was self-employed and maintained various lines of small commerce with merchandise she would buy wholesale and resell in Cartagena. Eventually, my family immigrated to New York, where I received a good education at the public schools I attended, followed by a Bachelor’s from a prestigious university.

My parents divorced while I was in middle school. My father moved to New Jersey while my sister, brother, and I lived with my mother in our apartment in Woodside, Queens. My mother worked long days, and we would usually see her after seven in the evening except for
Sundays, her day off. Now, I realize that my mother did just like my grandmother had done when my grandfather died. In New York, these two immigrant women worked relentlessly, like many others before and after them, to raise us. My grandmother cared for us while my mother worked. *Mama* prepared our meals and fed us while *El Show de Cristina* or *Primer Impacto* played on tv. She took us to and from school until we were old enough to go by ourselves, and occasionally treated us with an unexpected Saturday trip to Toys R’ Us. Hers was a fiercely protective and tough love.

These two women, who were not deterred by the sacrifices single motherhood required, showed me the way. It was only after reading the Latina Feminist Group’s life stories that it dawned on me how I had ended up reading the Group’s testimonios. Although I might have come across their stories through other means, this doctoral program set me up to one day sit in my living room reading their testimonios. Sitting on my couch, I contemplated how similar my path has been to the one taken by some of the Group’s members. I realized that I had inherited and cultivated strength of character and perseverance from growing up in a household led by two indefatigable women. Surely, I owe some of my determination to these two women. What I took for granted was the immense gift they bestowed on me as role models. As a young person I did not dwell on the significance of my grandmother having raised three adolescents on her own in 1970s Colombia. I did not think much of what it must have been for my mother to be a single earner and parent. She did such a wonderful job. They made it appear simply ordinary. (And maybe, I think, it’s more normal than we realize.) Their matter-of-fact way and their ease in facing hardships probably showed me that, of course, I could go to college, and on to graduate school.

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College is something that both eludes and looms over many immigrant and second generation children as a pre-ordained expectation. This fact is not lost on me as I contemplate my trajectory today. This dichotomy, often stemming from classed circumstances, is part of Latinx immigrant experiences. My parents never explicitly requested that I go to college. However, the weight of what I felt to be an obligation to them solidified as I grew older. Like other Latinx immigrant children, I felt it to be my duty to excel, to confirm that their struggles in a new country were not for naught. It’s hard to say how much of my motivation to get to where I am today was shaped by these external expectations and how much was internal. Yet here I am. I arrived at the Academy largely due to the influence of these foundational forces in my life.

◆

As I engaged in research in Cajamarca, I understood that these aspects of my life stood out to my collaborators and marked how we related to each other. Even when comparing my family’s socioeconomic resources in Colombia to the material resources available to my collaborators in Cajamarca, I realize that there is a significant gap. These differences all had an impact in how I was able to carry out my work in Cajamarca. Moreover, I was often introduced by luchadorxs (participants in the struggle) as the compañera (comrade) from Colombia. Being Colombian was usually a boon to my reception. Notably, my collaborators omitted the fact that I was coming from the United States and pursuing my studies there. When people heard I was Colombian, they frequently remarked how much they admired some thing or another about Colombian people or culture. Sometimes it came as a comment about how nice “Colombian”
Spanish sounded. That I had no choice in the matter of where I was born was inconsequential when they learned this about me. Rather it made some people quickly warm up to my presence. A few times I encountered compañerxs who had traveled to Colombia and who had met other defenders and researchers from there. Their positive impression of Colombia definitely helped me work with defenders in Cajamarca.

Nevertheless, these encouraging interactions were imbued with a latent coloniality. It was striking how often the adjective “bonito/a” (pretty) came up in these conversations about Colombia, suggesting that Peru somehow lacked these qualities. Racial politics of whitening, socioeconomic development, the sexualization of women’s bodies, and even the bravado of outlaws (e.g., Pablo Escobar) uphold regional fantasies about Colombia. It was clear to me that this relational comparison was based on (internalized) European and Anglo-American hegemonic standards of beauty, wealth, and power. As far as these stereotypes go, they are incited by the circulation of popular media across Latin America. There was not much I could do when I came upon such discourse, and I knew just as well that my being Colombian generated familiarities of struggle against global imperial powers. This perceived camaraderie in the face of a common oppressor aided my quicker acceptance by defensorxs. Researchers from the United States and Europe tended to seen with more suspicion given the tense history of interactions with European and Anglo-American foreigners during the anti-mining struggle.

My education and socioeconomic background effectively afforded me ease of passage into various spaces while I did research. I knew that luchadorxs were aware of how my university connections, command of English, and potential networks might further their cause. Therefore, allowing me to participate in their movement activities was a strategic choice as well as a reflection of their hospitality. In everyday situations, my positionality also had the potential
to augment the local social standing of the people I happened to be with at a given moment. I felt this most strongly when I lived in Celendín. There, my collaborators would sometimes emphasize where I came from when they introduced me to friends. Some defensoras would also request that I join them in running errands at government offices. On these occasions, they invited me along so that they could consult with me as they negotiated with bureaucrats. On other occasions, I seemed to have been called upon to act as witness and prevent malfeasance toward them by those same or other bureaucrats.

Sometimes, my status simply as an outsider—someone not from Celendín or Cajamarca—placed me in the category of confidant. I was likely unwittingly tested as a confidant and, when my confidentiality was confirmed, their trust was earned. Some collaborators who became my friends confided things in me that they had either never told another person or required my utmost discretion. My position as a confidant was cemented precisely because I was not partial to small-town rivalries that would engross locals in Celendín or Cajamarca. And, in general, I avoided interfering as much as possible in disputes, mostly limiting my input to the prudent observations.

We are not trained, in Anthropology, to be people in the midst of research. We are trained to be research tools—devices—that gather “data.” So, what are we to do with the messiness of the differential power positions we hold when we come into and participate in daily life in the places where we work? What are we supposed to do with the bonds we form in spite of these differential positions (a true testament to how we can connect across difference)? No wonder U.S. Anthropology experienced an existential “postmodern” crisis and a reflexive-literary turn in the 1980s and 90s (see Clifford and Marcus 2010). These trends reflected a critical awakening of the problems inherent to Anthropology as a social science discipline.
I take seriously the dangers of interpersonal relations (Stacey 1988) between the researcher and the people who allow us (researchers) to barge into (and out of) their lives to find out things. I do not pretend that my being a woman flattened the social, economic, and racialized differences between myself and my collaborators, a point of critique in feminist ethnography of the 1980s and 90s (Visweswaran 1997). But like any other relationship we enter in our social worlds, we make choices about how to navigate these circumstances ethically and lovingly. I believe that we can be both accountable to ourselves and our collaborators and still relate to each other in ways that are genuine. My return to Cajamarca in 2019, a trip purely for the pleasure of seeing my friends and collaborators was the best trip I had to Cajamarca. I felt liberated from the constraints of research obligations that demanded me to meet certain goals and gather certain kinds of information. This aspect of ethnographic methods has never sat well with me, and it is something I am still working to make meaning of beyond accepting that I participated in it. Still, when we channel feminist ethnographical methods that “stress equality, intimacy, dialogue, and reciprocity between researchers and participants” (Checker, Davis, and Schuller 2014), we challenge the coloniality of Anglo-European epistemologies.

A research project

At its core, my research and analysis is thoroughly guided by the politics cultivated in both activist research and feminism. I integrate theoretical approaches found in multiple fields to produce a feminist decolonial analytical framework potentiated by mobility through borders. I consider this mobility transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. The latter, much in the same was as “multiculturalism,” implies a dialogue between disciplines and the possible joining of
tools and perspectives from various fields. Transdisciplinarity, however, is about interrogating borders and fusing frameworks to create new approaches. In other words, creating assemblages of knowing that subvert the modern/colonial disciplining of knowledge, as Wallerstein et al. (1996) hinted in their Gulbenkian Commission report on the state of the social sciences.

In this dissertation, I situate defensoras’ political practices as a feminist politics speaking to global north academic feminist understandings that fail to capture defensoras’ incomplete allegiance to liberal feminism. In this manner, my work dialogues with the political work emerging from “dissident spaces of solidarity” (Gómez-Barris 2018, xiii) in Latin America. That is to say, the theory and praxis constructed by Indigenous, Andean, and urban peripheral feminisms. For example, some Andean communal feminisms envision equality as stemming from the dismantling of heteropatriarchal structures of power rather than from a paradigm of individual rights (Aguinaga et al. 2013). Though frequently sharing a foundation with cosmopolitical projects such as Buen Vivir, these feminisms operationalize oppositional logics to resist patriarchalized capitalist orders while also critiquing heteronormative indigenous politics (see Cochrane 2014; Galindo 2013; Léon 2009; Paredes 2008). Accounting for these feminist forms centers defensoras’ contributions to feminism(s) by underscoring how the fragmentary character of feminism allows us to be “feministas en todas partes” (feminists everywhere) (Masson 2007). One of my goals is to construct an analytical methodology that seriously engages the anti-imperialist, feminist practices of defensoras to transcend the limitations discipline-based studies.

Anchoring my analysis on the critical potential of these integrated frameworks gestures toward the emancipatory potential of conjoining feminist methods and decolonial studies. Thus, I build on the vital insights of black and women of color feminists which pointed out the need to
generate feminisms through an appreciation of intersectional vectors of oppression that shape women’s experiences (e.g., Beal 2005; Crenshaw 2010; Combahee River Collective 1981; Lorde 1988; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981). My project also reminds us how displacing universalisms (e.g., Lugones 2010; Sandoval 1991; Visweswaran 1994; and from decolonial studies, de Sousa Santos 2009; Dussel 2003), such as the category of gender, in favor of situated experiential knowledge (Haraway 1988) from a multiplicity of gendered, racialized, and classed positions—through disidentification, “coalitional subjects,” or plurality (Alarcón 1990; Castañeda Salgado 2016; Chow 1992; Sandoval 2000)—is a decolonizing practice.

The close alignment of feminist and decolonial accounts is not coincidental, as Harding (2017) aptly points out. Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) “borderlands” thinking, which remains a fundamental concept for a Global South queer feminism of color (Gómez-Barris 2017; 2018; Valencia 2018), was influential for Latin American decolonial scholars (Mignolo 2010; 2012; Mignolo and Escobar 2010). Thinking through borders reveals how the fluidity of frontier spaces is capable of undermining heteropatriarchal orders of knowledge and power. If, as proponents of decolonial studies from the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality project indicate, de-colonization originates with non-Eurocentric epistemologies, then literature, orality, and artivism fit within a decolonial model that re-focuses “the geopolitics of knowledge” (Walsh 2007a, 2007b).

I also follow the lead of feminist anthropologists (e.g., Behar 1993, 2008; Deloria 1988; Hurston 1938; Patai 1988), who took up literary genres in ethnography, and US and Third World feminists who enacted a subversive praxis of decolonial transdisciplinarity (Barroso 2016). Indeed, there is a chapter in this dissertation centered on testimonios. However, I felt that I could not transcribe and write the testimonios of my collaborators without also writing about my positionality. I had to narrate myself to you, my readers, to provide some sense of my place and
voice in the analysis that follows and also in the testimonios I composed with the defensoras I met in Cajamarca. At the final keystroke, the reality that I have (interpreted and) written has been refracted through my own experiences. I, too, am interwoven into the text of my collaborators’ testimonios.

◆

This research is situated from my position as an able-bodied, cis-gender, heterosexual, light-skinned Latina with higher education degrees coming from an U.S. immigrant working-class upbringing. Acknowledging the differences that mark the important, though not unbridgeable, distance between my collaborators and myself is a critical part of employing a decolonial analytical methodology predicated on a multiplicity of perspectives rather than a singular, disciplinary framework (Gómez-Barris 2017). This dissertation project is my avowal that the interconnectedness of our struggles against heterosexualist capitalist-patriarchal oppressive forces is not severed at the door of the Academy.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Muchas de las que aquí escribimos hemos pasado…de ser el objeto de estudio a ser sujeto de producción de conocimiento. Producimos desde la diferencia colonial.¹

Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso, Tejiendo de Otro Modo

The night before Mirtha Villanueva’s U.S. visa appointment in Lima, we were talking on the phone to go over potential interview questions. In the fall of 2019, I had invited Mirtha to my dissertation defense and, during the last three months of that year, Mirtha and I worked together to gather all the paperwork that would ensure her the possibility of travelling to St. Louis. This was the last bureaucratic hurdle left before arranging travel logistics. Mirtha’s daughter Mili, a journalist and comunicadora social (social communicator), had accompanied Mirtha to Lima for the appointment.

Mirtha and Mili were on the call together, in their hotel room in Lima, while I sat on my bed in St. Louis coordinating with some apprehension the particulars for the interview. Before the call was over, I finally greeted Mili who had been in the background helping her mother compile and organize the necessary documents. Mili shared her excitement over the prospect of her mother traveling to the U.S. I mentioned that this was but a small way to reciprocate the

¹ “Many of us who write here have gone…from being the object of study to the subject of the production of knowledge. We produce from the colonial difference.”
knowledge they had generously shared with me. Mili responded that she thought it was great that her mother might be able to participate in the U.S., but she hoped I’d return to Cajamarca “para replicar la tesis” (to replicate the dissertation). We both laughed. But Mili was also serious. She continued to say that this should happen because my research needs to be evaluated “como se debe, que el pueblo juzgue” (as it should be, that the people judge it).

Mili was not suggesting that I write a report and send it back. Or that I return and give a “presentation” on my dissertation. No, she was asking for completely doing the defense over (a thought that might give many a PhD a flash of panic) in Cajamarca. To re-enact, to re-create, the defense so that I would defend my investigation before the people who knew the subject matter best. I agreed with her, musing what that might look like. The interesting thing is that “réplicas” (copies) are also what ecoterritorial defenders in Cajamarca call the re-production of the talleres (workshops) they participate in. It is expected that whoever participates in these workshops or trainings will bring back home (to the struggle) what they have learned, thereby spreading and articulating various knowledges. Mili’s exhortation requires me to return to Cajamarca to articulate my knowledge with that of my collaborators; to (re)create with them. The ball was in my court. She was challenging me to enter into the horizontal dialogue I have passionately advocated for back in the Ivory Tower for all these years.

How am I to begin processing this paradox? As an individual, I might be able to return to Cajamarca and present my dissertation to my collaborators. Indeed, this would create a space of dialogue where multiple knowledge regimes might articulate. Yet at the scale where academic scholarship is dominant, we merely approximate horizontal epistemic exchanges. The Academy dictates the terms of engagement and access to the global platforms and spaces where “other” knowledges might be granted legitimacy. This means that until these hegemonic forms of
knowledge production are de-centered, hierarchies of knowledge will still subordinate the knowledge and epistemic authority of non-academics (de Sousa Santos 2009; 2012; Fals-Borda and Mora-Osejo 2003).

My research calls into question the colonial assumptions underpinning contemporary understandings of extractivism. The sixteen months of ethnographic research I conducted with the *defensoras* (women ecoterritorial defenders) of Cajamarca is situated at the fraught extractive frontier where social conflict paralyzed the expansion of a large-scale mining project and generated a coalitional struggle against extractive-led economic development. This dissertation conceptualizes extractivism as a modern/colonial product of power and knowledge that has feminized the land and inhabitants from the time of the European invasion of the Americas. I investigate how extractivism becomes inscribed on the *cuerpo territorio* (body-territory), a notion derived from Indigenous and Latin American feminisms which posits that the corporeal (human) body and geospatial territory are acted upon and subjugated by the same heteropatriarchal capitalist regimes of power. By treating the modalities of gendered state violence at the extractive frontier as indicative of an “extractive security state,” this research reveals the operation of state techniques that intensify the reterritorialization of women’s bodies and the land. Within this context, *defensoras* nonetheless exercise agentive power within the sociopolitical conditions that have given shape to a masculine terrain of ecoterritorial politics in
northern highland Peru. This dissertation argues that defensoras’ political praxis, including practices of autonomy and public leadership, enacts important critiques of capitalist patriarchy.

**Setting the Stage: Large-scale Mining Operations in Cajamarca**

Industrial mining represents the prevalent extractive industry in highland Peru, a contemporary counterpart to extensive colonial deep-vein mining that tunneled its way into the bowels of the Andes. In 2017, fourteen percent of the country was under mining concession (CooperAcción 2017). As part of a state-sanctioned development agenda, these concessions are primarily given to large-scale open pit mining projects. These “mega” mining projects entail the removal of large quantities of earth producing a proportionally small amount of the sought mineral.² In effect, large pits are excavated where at mountain tops where regional headwaters are located. To illustrate what this looks like on the landscape, figure 1 shows Minera Yanacocha, the gold mine affiliated with the mining project that led to the 2011-12 anti-mining uprising in Cajamarca.

Figure 1 Minera Yanacocha. Photograph from the archives of mining.com (Jamasmie 2016).

² For example, the extraction of thirty tons of earth yields merely one ounce of gold (Heeter and Tuller 2005).
Materially, the effects of this industry are environmental and socioeconomic. Communities that live near or downstream from these projects are faced with imperiled water quality and quantity, with local urban and rural inhabitants noting water scarcity in connection to these large mining projects (Arellano-Yanguas 2011). Water pollution and heavy metal poisoning risks arise from the release of toxic substances into the immediate environment, in particular from acid mine drainage. Cyanide heap leaching as the main operation for dissolving gold from soil requires the disposal of residual cyanide tailings. At the peak of its production, the Yanacocha gold mining district operated the largest cyanide heap-leaching process in the world (Bury 2004). Improper disposal of waste also represents a threat to water quality, with farmers in the area having periodically noted changes to their water including discoloration and foul odor (Bebbington et al. 2008; Triscritti 2013). Moreover, since the mining operation began at Yanacocha, farmers have endured the inexplicable massive death of livestock and fish (Bury 2004). For urban populations, water scarcity has become a serious impact. My collaborators frequently talked with me about the increased water shortages they have experienced since extraction began at Yanacocha. Some of my collaborators also correlated the presence of Yanacocha’s mining activities with a surge in cancer diagnoses in the region. Locals surmise that higher heavy metal content in the treated water coming from the mine, now serving the capital’s water system, is the primary cause for this rise.

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3 The 2011-12 uprising in Cajamarca aimed at stopping the Conga mine, a project owned by the same corporations as Minera Yanacocha. Conga called for the destruction of four Alpine lakes located in the provinces of Hualgayoc and Cajamarca. Mining at this site was intended to occur in two lakes; with the remaining two lakes to be used as rubble and debris deposits (Salazar 2011). Upon conclusion of an independent review by an international expert commission in 2012, this plan was later modified to require the drainage of only two lakes. The project also anticipated replacing the water sources eliminated by the lakes’ drainage by building four reservoirs. Even under the best conditions, however, mining corporations cannot guarantee that there will be no environmental contamination deriving from their mining activities.
The material stakes for defenders, and the broader local population, are great. Cajamarcan defensoras are up against socioenvironmental impacts to their livelihoods that imperil a fundamental part of their lives—water. The social impacts are also deeply felt. My collaborators frequently lamented the internal community divisions sowed by Yanacocha’s entrance as well as the growing rates of crime and prostitution. For the ecoterritorial struggle and the women’s organizations that emerged from resistance to the Conga mining project, the destruction of their territory and its attendant social and biophysical ecologies also threatens to sever their belonging to the land.

Social science studies on mining have previously examined its organizational structures and migration impacts (e.g., Dewind 1975; Parpart 1983; Perrings 1979). Mining became the object of scholarly attention for its role as a socially structuring force, especially as it involved classed-based struggles in the mid- to late-twentieth century (e.g., Kruijt and Vellinga 1977; Nash 1993). These have been largely political economic perspectives on mining. More recent anthropological literature on mining, influenced by postmodernist approaches and the global scope of neoliberalizing economies (e.g., Sawyer 2004; Kirsch 2006), has looked instead at the fragmentation of power (e.g., Tsing 2001; Welker 2009) and the role of corporations and corporate ideologies shaping mining development (e.g., Benson and Kirsch 2010; Golub 2014). An interdisciplinary line has queried through a political ecology lens (e.g., Bebbington et al. 2008; Bebbington 2012; de Echave 2005) and a growing body of literature has integrated a gendered perspective into mining studies (Jenkins 2014; Lahiri-Dutt and Macintyre 2006; Orozco Zevallos 2013; Rolston 2014). Some scholars have studied the circulation and relations of expert knowledge, notably Fabiana Li (2015) on Cajamarca. This latter trend is located in a growing anthropological field in the context of new materialist studies. This line of thinking, in
the vein of ontological science studies, calls into question how materials such as “natural resources” come into being (see Behrends 2008; Orlove and Caton 2010; Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014; Sacher 2014).

This dissertation, however, revolves around the politics of mining and, more broadly, ecoterritorial politics. Mining is the backdrop against which women in their own ways refuse the structuring forces that reproduce systems of racialized, gendered, and classed subjugation—the same systems that are integral to industrial mining and hegemonic classifications of “natural resources.” Indeed, re-directing our attention to questions of decoloniality already implicates questioning the ontology of “natural resources.” The main focus of my work at this juncture is on the interruption of colonial/modern epistemic frameworks by defensoras’ centering of their body-territories in what is ultimately an ontological struggle of material consequences.

A Feminist Decolonial Theoretico-Praxis

José Esteban Muñoz declared: “Queerness is not yet here…we are not yet queer” (2009, 1). Likewise, horizontality does not exist. But it is a horizon (no pun intended) full of potentiality—the potential to create a different world. I believe that moments when we approach horizontality in our exchange of knowledges are possible. These are moments when we subvert the “coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano 2000); however, until this becomes the rule rather than the exception horizontality will not yet be. I spent many days in the throes of semi-existential crises and psychic suffering arising from my presence in Cajamarca. I felt hypocritical and colonial. I was and continue to be, through this dissertation, complicit in the structures of

4 The idea of “coloniality of power” proposed by Quijano (2000) refers to the paradigmatic Eurocentric framework of power operating through relations of domination (racial, gendered, and thereafter classed) established during colonization of the Americas. These relations inform “modernity” and thus perpetuate colonial structures in our present day. This is why the Modernity/coloniality Research Program affirms that modernity cannot be understood without its complement, coloniality (see Escobar 2004; 2007; Mignolo 2007).
epistemological domination that I critique. Certainly, there are ways of lessening the damage academic research does, such as following Orlando Fals Borda’s (1999) Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. PAR would entail actually making the research a grassroots collaborative endeavor and not simply consulting informants here and there about our research questions. Xochitl Leyva Solano and Shannon Speed (2008) point to the challenges inherent in decolonizing social science research methodologies even when “co-labor[ing]” in the production of knowledge. In any case, I took neither of those two paths. So, I found myself located in the position that I was: doing conventional ethnographic research in the Global South.

Neither this dissertation, nor this introduction, resolve this internal and personal contradiction. This paradox informs my work, however. For this reason, I use a feminist decolonial analytical methodology in this dissertation; it is one of the remaining tools I can employ and control in relation to my research. I build on what Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso, Diana Gómez Correal, and Karina Ochoa Muñoz consider decolonial feminism to be:

Lo que se ha denominado feminismo descolonial representa el intento por articular varias tradiciones críticas y alternas a la modernidad occidental y, sobre todo, del pensamiento radical feminista de Nuestramérica. En este sentido, se reclama heredero, por un lado, del feminismo negro, de color y tercermundista en los Estados Unidos, con sus aportes sobre la manera en que se articula la opresión de clase, raza, género y sexualidad y la necesidad de producir una epistemología propia que parte de reconocer esta inseparabilidad de la opresión. Por otro, recupera el legado de las mujeres y feministas afrodescendientes e
It builds on the contributions of postcolonial feminism which brought attention to epistemic violence (Spivak 1994) and calls for North-South solidarities (Mohanty 2003). As a methodology, a feminist decolonial framework inverts the hegemonic uni-directionality characterizing institutionalized feminism. I push academic epistemologies to be the recipients of knowledge originating in Global South feminisms. I also draw on Macarena Gómez-Barris’s (2017) “decolonial femme methodology” to work from within the interstitial epistemological spaces that transgress disciplinary borders. Feminist decolonial methods are also critical methods that generate an analysis that has the study of coloniality, as opposed to modernity, as a starting point.

Undoing assumptions about the directionality of feminist theorizing entails heeding calls from nearly three decades ago about the imperative to decolonize anthropology (Harrison 1991). This requires a commitment to authentic collaboration and dialogue with intellectuals from the Third World/Global South. I challenge knowledge hierarchies that continue to re-entrench the hegemony of “euronorcentrismo” (Curiel 2010, 69; euronorthcentrism) in knowledge production. Thus, my work confronts unequal positions in the global structure of knowledge production (Walsh 2007), a fundamental aspect of the “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000). I elevate otros...
saberes (Hale and Stephen 2013) from intellectual peripheries, displacing the centrality of the Euro-Anglo academy in feminist and anthropological theorization.

Building on critiques of mainstream feminisms that narrow the political terrain to rights-based struggles, my analytical methods also draw on the concept of “transfeminism” (Valencia 2014) which reiterates the need to repoliticize feminism through the fluidity and boundlessness that trans/cuir/queer politics proposes. Transfeminism becomes a mode of political expression that escapes categorization and transgresses borders. Seeking new paths through unconventional routes (Ahmed 2006; 2017), transfeminist academic practices promote a transdisciplinary approach. My research does this by privileging a coalitional methodology of knowledge production. The notion of coalitional methods draws directly from Black and Third Worldist feminists in the 1970s who based their transnational coalitional activism on the heterogeneity of difference and a critique of anti-colonial nationalist movements that relied on heteropatriarchal and racialized structures of power (Higashida 2011).

In my work, subverting borders is a tri-fold process that un-disciplines, melds intellectual projects from different fields, and enacts a feminist decolonial praxis in our day-to-day professional lives. For this reason, I accompany this dissertation with a public photographic and testimonio exhibit featuring the political narratives of five defensoras. The exhibit, though temporary, will later be transformed into a digital archive accessible through this dissertation and online searches. This exhibit gives different meaning to the production of knowledge coming out my work with defensoras. The photographs and oral narratives open up anthropology, and the social sciences, to possibilities for fusing art, research, and activism.
Research in Cajamarca

This dissertation is about the women who self-organized within Cajamarca’s regional anti-extractivist struggle in 2011 to protect their headwaters from large-scale mining projects. In Cajamarca, the coalitional anti-extractivist movement is represented by the mixed-gender Frente de Defensa Ambiental de Cajamarca (The Environmental Defense Front of Cajamarca). When I went to Cajamarca for the first time, in 2014, I met defenders who had led and participated in the 2011-2012 struggle to stop development of the Conga mining project. The anti-Conga mobilizations protested the expansion of Minera Yanacocha to new areas of the region’s mountain headwaters. The movement, which picked up momentum in 2011 and led to moments of conflictive social explosion, was preceded by another anti-mining movement in 2004 (against Yanacocha’s expansion to Quilish Mountain). Both anti-mining movements were constituted through a combination of civic organizations and civilian activism. The Conga mining conflict lasted longer and was more violent and fraught than the 2004 mobilizations. Significantly, the anti-Conga movement generated long-lasting ecoterritorial mobilizing. Its impacts are in part what motivated my research in Cajamarca.

Before I first traveled to Cajamarca, I spent several weeks in Lima working as an in-house anthropologist at the Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Sociedad / International Institute for Law and Society (IIDS/IILS). The legal institute is a non-profit organization made up of legal and academic scholars with the purpose of taking on strategic litigation on emblematic Indigenous rights cases. I first reached out to the director knowing that they were supporting some of the cases that had arisen out of the Conga conflict. When I arrived at their office, I learned that the director and one of the main lawyers had a long history working with ronderas and ronderos from the rondas campesinas of Cajamarca, one of the entities constituting...
the Defense Front. This long-term commitment and history facilitated the Institute’s work with Cajamarca’s ecoterritorial defenders. Eventually, the team began planning a trip to Cajamarca. The goal of the trip was to collect testimonials from defenders who were being politically persecuted by the central state for their opposition to the mine. The testimonials would support the case the Institute was building before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to get the case moved to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

On that first trip, I met ronderos and ronderas that I would encounter again in the years when I returned to Cajamarca. Being a part of the Institute’s legal team opened doors for me into the movement. In the years since 2012, the struggle has encountered challenges arising from individuals who entered their ranks in order to gather intelligence about the movement on behalf of the central state or the mining corporation. Many defenders are now wary of external actors—Peruvians and foreigners alike—who arrived seeking to “study” the struggle. Having the Institute vouch for me on those initial trips to Cajamarca extended defenders’ trust to me.

6 Rondera or rondero refers to a member of the Rondas Campesinas, generally translating to rural patrols, which are juridical entities constituted by rural community members (oftentimes farmers). Rondas Campesinas were founded in the late 1970s as a strategy for combatting cattle rustling in region of Cajamarca (Starn 1999). After decades struggling for official state recognition, Law 27908 (Law of Rondas Campesinas) was passed in 2002 by Peru’s congress, recognizing Rondas Campesinas as legitimate juridical bodies overseeing their communities and territories. This status was supported by article 149 in Peru’s Constitution, which recognizes cases of “special jurisdiction.” Interestingly, article one of Law 27908 declares that indigenous peoples’ rights are also applicable to the rondas. Historically, the rondas have not organized through ethnic identification; however, my preliminary fieldwork revealed that Cajamarcan ronderas/os are beginning to self-identify as ronderas/os and as indigenous. Although over the years the functions of the rondas have changed, today they remain an important part of community justice and decision-making processes in rural Cajamarca. I frequently heard that the rondas from the province of Bambamarca were “fuertes” (strong), meaning they had strong unity. Strong also referred to how access into their organization was tough for outsiders; they were usually closed off to non-members. That being said, each ronda was unique, and some were more easy-going about who might visit and enter their space. In Celendín Province, for example, I was able to meet with leadership from the rondas and, one time, proposed my project before a group of ronderas. See Starn 1999; Gitlitz and Rojas 1985; and Gitlitz 2013 for more on the history and function of the rondas. Kimberley Theidon (2003) also writes about the rondas of the Southern highlands in her work on post-conflict community re-building.
Women’s Ecoterritorial Defense

Women’s Organizations

My research in Cajamarca primarily focused on the women who self-organized into autonomous groups (organizations) as a result of their participation in the anti-Conga struggle. I refer to the women from these organizations as my collaborators. Not only did these women allow me to bring my project to fruition, they were also active participants in shaping this research and the knowledge that I came back to St. Louis with. For these reasons I see them as co-producers of the knowledge I share through this text.

In the Region of Cajamarca, I worked with two associations of self-organized women. Organización de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama de Celendín is located in Celendín, capital of Celendín Province. In Cajamarca (city), I worked with Asociación de Mujeres en Defensa de la Vida y la Pachamama and a third association, Asociación de Mujeres en Defensa del Agua. Although I got to know some members of the last organization, timing constraints and limits placed by the association meant that I did not work closely with them in 2017.

These organizations were established under similar circumstances: they arose from the anti-Conga mining conflict of 2011-2012. Many of the members in these associations mobilized at the start of the conflict. Some newer members joined after the conflict but share an orientation toward the defense of water and the territory. Over the years, I have encountered various accounts of how the association in Celendín was established. However, both the Organización de Mujeres from Celendín and Mujeres en Defensa de la Vida appear to have formed out of similar  

7 Heretofore, any reference to Cajamarca denotes the city. References to Cajamarca Region will be qualified with the designation region or regional.
circumstances. The founders and original members in these organizations were activated by the anti-Conga uprising. Some of them had already participated in the 2004 anti-mining movement. For these groups of women the need for their own organizing space became evident as they desired to grow more involved in the movement.

The women who have been members since the founding of their organizations talked to me about the challenges of participating in the movement as women. Their ecoterritorial struggle is comprised of a mixed-gender movement mobilized by a coalition of regional organizations. Leadership for the anti-Conga movement was spearheaded by the Defense Front, whose leadership is predominantly made up of men. By virtue of geographic location, the women living in Cajamarca tended to interact more with the leaders of the Front. In Celendín, movement solidarity came in the form of PIC-Plataforma Interinstitucional de Celendín (Inter-institutional Platform of Celendín), a coalitional association of more than a dozen local organizations. The Defense Front and PIC remain highly masculinized spaces of struggle, though this is slowly changing as a result of women’s autonomous organizing.

Although women might have been participating in actions and mobilizations in equal numbers to men, their prominence has been rendered invisible at various scales. Most leadership and decision-making positions tend to be occupied by men. This “tendency” is a reflection of the broader heteropatriarchal relations of power which inform gendered expectations and roles in Andean Peru. For example, public roles are generally reserved for men while women are encouraged to occupy domestic roles (even in the movement). If women are allowed to join in discussions taking place at mixed-gender organizational meetings, many defensoras feel inhibited from speaking up. This latter situation motivated women to create spaces where they
would feel freer to speak and where they could develop their own direction about how to support and participate in the struggle.

The women who participate in the organizations I worked with have diverse backgrounds crossing a multiplicity of social categories. Varying educational levels, employment, socioeconomic class, and conjugal status, are some of the main distinctions from one compañera to another and between both organizations. From a local perspective, defensoras from Cajamarca are urban women, while those that live in Celendín inhabit a middle ground between el campo (countryside) and ciudad (city). For farmers who live in the countryside of the region, Celendín may represent an urbanized context, and thus “ciudad,” even if to a cosmopolitan gaze Celendín seems no greater than a town. Still, connection to rural life is unequivocally stronger among Shilicas and Shilicos than among most urban-dwellers I knew in Cajamarca. This connection was evident among my collaborators in Celendín and other Shilica/os I met. It was not rare to find that people who kept residence in Celendín also maintained farmland in the outskirts of the city, or had relatives living in hamlets and towns throughout the province.

If defensoras from Celendín are rural-urban women, those in Cajamarca, at least in local terms, could be considered more urban. The distinction between rural and urban backgrounds functions as a key determining factor for the employment status (as well as job type) of defensoras. In other words, there is a direct correlation between degree of urbanity and employment. Cajamarca, as capital of the region, boasts a larger population and economy, and

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8 Shilica/o is the typical name of persons from Celendín.
9 This hierarchization pivots on the sociopolitical order established by the Spanish Crown after its invasion of the Americas starting in the fifteenth century. The racialized political regimes of the Crown that economized the spatial distribution of the colonies in South America set up the current predominant inequalities and biases between coastal cities and those of the highlands and the Amazon. The greater the geographical distance from the capital(s) the greater the social gap between the lighter-skinned elites that benefitted most from the Spanish Empire and the lower, racialized and genderized classes making up the majority of the rural-based population in the geopolitical area that would become Peru.
more extensive commercial traffic than Celendín. In Celendín, work is found in a limited number of job categories: small business, municipal government, mining, and agriculture. Even for defensoras with a college degree, employment opportunities were scarce in Celendín. The spatial politics of labor are significant because they are a vital factor in the political economy of defensoras’ participation in the struggle. Although most other defensoras had completed a high school education, they frequently depended on the income of kin or on sporadic work.

Research Methods

Although I knew several defensoras from before my continuous year-long research in 2017, I met some of my closest collaborators that year. I spent February through July in Celendín, and August through October in Cajamarca, and the remaining months in Lima, where I became involved with the national women’s movement and the NGOs that supported Cajamarcan defensoras. In Cajamarca and Celendín, my deep engagement with some defensoras was facilitated by the flexibility of schedules unconstrained by employment obligations. There, my primary “research method” was participant-observation, which meant that I spent much of my day following compañeras around as they went about their daily activities. Sometimes we would make plans to go on walks, or they would invite me to their homes for coffee or lonche (early evening snack). We kept each other company and, perhaps, they sought the comfort of companionship as much as I did in what otherwise felt like lonely days for me. I conducted around a dozen political history interviews, and some of these have been incorporated into chapter five. I also attended their meetings in addition to supporting them in the planning and execution of actions. A number of times I joined their travels to other cities when they were invited to participate in encuentros (gatherings). On rare occasions, I was permitted to audio-
record meetings (including the Escuela Hugo Blanco discussed in chapter four). Most of my analysis is based on the fieldnotes I kept from my time living in Peru.

On Labels and Analytical Categories

So far, I have referred to the participants of the anti-Conga movement as “defenders.” I privilege using the term defender over activist because neither my collaborators nor the majority of the defenders I met refer to themselves as activists. This is a crucial dimension to the politics of ecoterritorial defense and how my collaborators define the nature of their mobilizing. The core members of this movement do not see ecoterritorial defense as a “cause” in the way a political interest or claim might be cause for activism as we know it in the U.S. or even in metropolitan regions of Peru. This indexes a geopolitical disjuncture about the when and where of activism. In other words, activism is a classed praxis—to speak of activism means seizing a register available to those with a certain educational background in Peru. Even what I call “movement” is my own conceptualization—a cultural and epistemological translation—of what defenders usually refer to as la lucha (the struggle). While some defenders occasionally referred to their struggle belonging to “movimientos sociales” (social movements), this happened during strategic dialogues with social actors outside of their struggle. For example, at panels and meetings focused on state repression of social movements in Latin America.

Some of my collaborators referred to themselves as luchadoras (women fighters) instead of defensoras (women defenders). The former was most often the case among my collaborators in Celendín. This is in part due to how the two organizations have articulated with the NGOs that support their defense. The organization in Cajamarca is closely aligned with the Cajamarcan NGO Grufides, an environmental organization that widely supports environmental endeavours in
the region. The women’s organization in Cajamarca has also developed through the strategic adoption of the political identity of the defensora. Thus, their politicization has gone hand-in-hand with broader national and international campaigns visibilizing environmental activists as defenders of the environment and human rights. In Celendín, women have come to identify themselves through becoming politicized because of their role in the struggle. They see themselves as luchadoras because they have been and continue to fight in defense of their territory.

Throughout the text, my observations privilege how my collaborators refer to themselves: whether luchadora or defensora. However, my voice becomes salient when I insert my own politics into the production of this ethnographic knowledge-text. I use the gender-inclusive -x, or the plural -xs, ending when the statement presented is something I write as the author of that idea or statement. This looks like defensorxs or luchadorxs. If I am presenting something I heard from my collaborators, then the noun ending remains conventional, e.g., defensores. This is because my collaborators do not use gender-inclusive x endings in their everyday language. Yet in my own feminist critique of the heterosexualist patriarchal moorings of the Spanish (Castilian) language, I opt for a gender-inclusive approach. Finally, I use defenders, defensorxs, and luchadorxs interchangeably when I write in general terms, or if the source of the information is not pertinent to an argument or statement’s point. However, my use of luchadorxs is most often limited to situations related to defenders in Celendín since this is where people overwhelmingly spoke of themselves in terms of la lucha. In sum, if traditional gendered endings appear in the text, it is an indication that what is stated comes directly from what I heard or was told by defenders. When gender non-binary language is used, this is an assertion of my personal politics and a signal to my analysis rather than observations.
I have also chosen to use the label ecoterritorial and the concept of *extractive frontier* throughout the dissertation over other closely related terms for a few reasons. My adherence to “ecoterritorial” follows the conceptualization by activist researchers Raphael Hoetmer (2013) and Maristella Svampa (2013b) in the Global South. Hoetmer (2013) contends that labels such as socioenvironmental or environmental elide the fact that these conflicts and struggles are about autonomy in a territory. Furthermore, “environment” is commonly used as an inert (in the sense of non-agentive) and depoliticized term that invisibilizes the social relations between living and non-living entities that constitute a territory. Ecoterritorial, therefore, recognizes the complex of relational networks that makes these struggles about more than just a passive geographical space “on a map.”

“Extractive frontiers” are the fraught territories where extractive projects unfold. In my use of this concept, I broaden the notion of “capitalist frontiers” (Tsing 2003), which refers to the “new” remote locations where capitalist forces and ideations converge to extract material resources from a territory. Frontiers, however, “are not just discovered at the edge; they are projects in making geographical and temporal experience” (Tsing 2005, 28). Drawing on this latter definition, I hone in on how a populated territory, such as Cajamarca, can be abstracted and transformed into a figurative frontier through the imposition of extractive projects. Cajamarca’s inhabitants are erased as actors with claims to exist in the time and place of an extractive enterprise. I likewise draw on the notion of “extractive zone” because it underscores the colonial paradigm that marks out space and “reduce[s] life to capitalist resource conversion” (Gómez-Barris 2017, xvi). I combine these two ideas as a way to more robustly depict from the perspective of decoloniality the heteropatriarchal capitalist forces that propel extractivism.
Extractivism

In my research, I conceive of extractivism as a structuring and processual force. By that I mean that extractivism, beyond an economic model, is an active influence shaping the beings and territories upon which it is carried out. As a technique of plunder and displacement, it generates processes that marketize nature and reterritorialize bodies and geographies. Extractivism is my translation for the Latin American concept of “extractivismo,” which is also translated as “extractive capitalism” (Gómez-Barris 2017). The emergence of scholarship from Latin America on extractivism in the past two decades is a result of this model’s position as a central component in state economic agendas. Macarena Gómez-Barris provides a critical political economic definition of the term as “the claim to resources by global capital in the face of increased protests about the importance of local resource sovereignty” (2017, xvii). However, a depoliticized definition might consider extractivism to be simply the removal of large quantities of raw materials for export.

Yet the exploitation of the land and extraction of minerals and “commodities” is not new to the Americas. We know that this was a fundamental aspect of European colonization on this hemisphere. Indeed, there is a long colonial history of raw material extraction by European interests all over the world. Alberto Acosta explains that “this extractivist mode of accumulation has been determined ever since [colonization] by the demands of the metropolitan centres of nascent capitalism” (2013, 62). What is new about extractivism in the twenty-first century is the manner in which extraction is conducted and its discursive functions in state-making projects.

This leads scholars to distinguish older forms with these new processes, by calling the latter “neoextractivismo” (neoextractivism) (e.g., Acosta 2013; Gudynas 2010). Neoextractivism
underscores how extractivism is now narrativized by central states as a developmentalist project by the nation and for the nation. This is in contrast to the preceding model where extractivism was predominantly a foreign enterprise in which a small domestic plutocracy reaped its benefits. Uruguayan Eduardo Gudynas, a critical scholar at the forefront of this burgeoning literature, provides a fundamental perspective on this concept. Gudynas’s main critique of neo-extractivism is that even if “the state plays a more active role, and gives extractivism a greater legitimacy because it redistributes some of the surplus to the population, it still repeats the negative environmental and social impacts of the old extractivism” (2010, 1).

Neoextractivism arose strongly in the “progressive” left-leaning governments that democratically came to power in the first decade of the twenty-first century in countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and even Venezuela and Brazil. These were the “Pink tide” governments that were touted as radical, transformative, and disruptive of the established political sphere. In many ways the regimes of Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, and Hugo Chávez were transformative; however, they also reinforced pre-existing patterns of modernity/coloniality. Under these governments, nationalist imaginaries were mobilized morally and affectively to shift conversations about extractivism (Gustafson 2019). They construed a vision of the future nation in which social good(s) depended on extraction—perpetuating myths of progress (see Dangl 2010; Dosh and Kligerman 2009 for Ecuador). In this way, progressive Leftist governments were still heirs to narratives of modernity.

Significantly, these neoextractive governments remain in positions of “commercial subordination” in global markets (Gudynas 2010). In other words, this is a situation in which “progressive governments have accepted the international division that has marked the continent since colonial times” (Svampa 2013a, 128). Svampa (2013a; 2013b) refers to the underlying
logic of this new order as the “consenso de los Commodities” (“Commodities consensus”),
alluding to the Washington Consensus neoliberal project, but now a logic “based on the large-
scale export of primary products” (2013a:117). Consequently, nations of the Global South
retain their role and function as primary resource producers for exportation to more
industrialized nations. Through this arrangement, even leftist governments have installed
programs dependent on export-led growth.

In this dissertation, extractivism is a catalyzing agent entering a mutually-constitutive
relationship with luchadorxs who formed political identities through their anti-extractivism
mobilizations. In the chapters that follow, but largely in chapters two and three, I explore
extractivism through its iterations in mechanisms of state violence and the legal system. Before
that, we should apprehend how extractivism is uniquely positioned to demonstrate that

...heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart
from each other. [And that] to understand the relation of the birth of the colonial/modern
gender system to the birth of global colonial capitalism—with the centrality of the
coloniality of power to that system of global power—is to understand our present
organization of life anew. (Lugones 2007, 187)

In the subsequent sections of this introduction, I start weaving these theoretical threads together
with respect to extractivism. I bring our attention to how extractivism functions through a
gendered ideology of nature.

10 Svampa also describes the Commodity Consensus as follows: “El ‘Consenso de los Commodities’ subraya el
ingreso de América Latina en un nuevo orden económico y político-ideológico, sostenido por el boom de los precios
internacionales de las materias primas y los bienes de consumo demandados cada vez más por los países centrales y
las potencias emergentes” (The “Commodities Consensus” highlights Latin America’s entry into a new economic
and political-ideological order, sustained by the international boom in raw material prices and consumer goods ever
more in demand by central nations and emergin powers.) (2013b:30).
Capitalist Patriarchy

The concept of “capitalist patriarchy” coined by Zillah Eisenstein (1979) proves useful for highlighting contemporary how forms of heterosexualist capitalist domination intersect with gender. In her foundational analysis, Eisenstein (1979) critiques both radical feminism and Marxist historical materialism for artificially and, ultimately, erroneously dichotomizing gendered and economic oppression. On the one hand, radical feminists who identified women’s oppression on the basis of gender suggested that balancing gendered relations would undo oppression toward women. These feminists did not account for class and race differences in women’s social positions. On the other hand, a Marxian approach considered social oppression to be a question of historical relations of production. Women as part of the proletariat would also be liberated when the working classes assumed control over the means of production. Marx and Engels did not perceive sexual-gendered division of labor standing apart from (if admittedly connected to) relations of production and reproduction in society. Women’s oppression, however, is not solely the result of economic exploitation as classed oppression is.

Eisenstein formulated an intervention by socialist feminists: to understand these structures of power as mutually dependent. Thus, “capitalist patriarchy” refers to a “mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring” (Eisenstein 1979, 5). In other words, the recognition that class structures are formed within hierarchal gendered ordering in capitalist societies. Black feminists (e.g., Combahee River Collective 1981; Davis 1981; Collins 2000) and Third World feminists (e.g., Sandoval 1991)—as well as decolonial feminists—have had a tacit and deep understanding of this relationship between capitalism and gender alongside its racial dimension. Even at the time of its publication, Eisenstein received criticism for summarily glossing over the racial aspect of power.
For women of color, the impossibility of separating these dimensions of power is clear (see Crenshaw 2010; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Smith 1983). bell hooks’s (1981) admonition of the second-wave women’s movement in the United States, and the academic feminist theorizing that accompanied it, accurately points to the limitations of the mainstream feminism of the time. Whiteness was, and continues to be, a blindfold that conceals the structural workings of racism in feminist politics that erased the experiences of Black women and women of color as racialized and classed women. Of course, this is precisely what Lugones (2007) crystallizes in her theorization of the “colonial/modern gender system.” Contemporary iterations of capitalism emerge out of colonial racial and gendered ideologies that allowed European (and later Anglo North American) control of labor and global market pathways which translated to the accumulation of capital by a centralized coterie of nations.

**Heteropatriarchal Racial Regimes of Power**

In a discussion about the land, territory, and extractive projects there is no way to circumvent the unspoken discursive giant that looms over: nature. This complicated idea, however, is at the core of any decolonial understanding of heteropatriarchal capitalism. Cuerpo territario (body territory), the framework I use for conceptualizing my collaborators’ ecoterritorial defense, emerges from a consciousness about how any territory is made to be suitable for domination and exploitation. To get at the processes that permit a territory to be fit for extraction we must account for the socio-historical construction of nature.

As postmodern and post-structural scholars have shown, specifically those doing critical studies of science, nature is a historical construct of continental European scientific epistemology (e.g., Stengers 1997). These origins may be traced back to the European Renaissance and the
influence of Cartesian dualism from the end of the seventeenth century into the Enlightenment period in Europe (Mignolo 2003). These European conceptions of a rational divide stemming from a subject-object dichotomy shaped social, and by extent scientific, relationality to the biophysical environs. Francis Bacon emerged as a primary figure in the historical processes that shaped scientific study. Generally accredited for his paradigmatic contributions to the scientific method—methodical procedure of systematic observation that was repeatable—Bacon’s legacy is also rooted in his conceptualization of the natural sciences. The idea of the natural science is predicated on an idea of nature (a thing external to the Subject). Stemming from an ontological position about the existence of fundamental logics to the way things happen, the natural sciences arose from inquiry into the “true workings” of things out there in “nature.” That these logics could be discovered through empirical methods based on systematic observation consolidated the objectification of nature.

It should not be lost that this was fundamentally a masculinist paradigm, where the white European “Man” was placed at the apex of a world ordering. “Man,” as proposed by these European male intellectuals, held the cognizant gaze—the subject position—from which the material world was apprehended. Objectification, as the primordial process of rationalization par excellence, and the scientific method allowed for locating “man” external to an ecological, biophysical environment. Culture and science went hand-in-hand to stabilize the idea of nature as a separate domain from the social life of (hu)mankind. At that time, Renaissance artistic movements, such as realist painting and landscape art, helped consolidate these perspective regimes anchored in a visual politics. The artistic point-of-view perspective objectified landscapes and placed the viewer as external subject (e.g., Thomas 1993; Jay 1988). In short, this
was “a totalizing male gaze which objectifies landscape and women in particular ways,” to only name but two categories of recipients of this gaze (Escobar 1999).

Gendering Nature

Concurrently, European colonial projects were underway in the Americas. Colonialism was instrumental to the development of “nature” insofar as it informed an epistemological position of European superiority. The entrance of the Americas into European consciousness electrified elite European societies now enthralled by “discovery” of previously unknown territories. With these developments in the background, Bacon proposed a new episteme of knowledge production also based on the discovery of “natural” laws. However, as Mignolo (2005) reminds us, Columbus’s unanticipated intrusion into the territories that would become the Americas was a pivotal socio-historical moment in the story of Euro-North global hegemony.

In the sixteenth century, there was a sense of admiration for the novelty and the exuberance of “nature.” Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta, who spent several decades in the Andes, wrote in 1590 that to know and understand “nature” was to understand its creator. However, a few decades after Acosta, Frances (sic) Bacon changed gears and conceived “nature” as something men have to conquer and dominate. The opposition was settled between nature and humanity. (Mignolo, 2005, xvi; emphasis added)

In a fashion, Bacon and his philosophical contemporaries captured what was already burgeoning as a predominant Western European ontological orientation. Identifying “nature” as something separate from civilization allowed a distinction to be constructed between the people in the “New World” territories and Europeans.
It also helped imperial powers justify their domination of indigenous women, men, and territory in the Americas. The Cartesian separation of the mind and the body rendered the body as something closer to “nature.” Quijano contends:

In Cartesian radical dualism, “body” is “nature,” ergo “sex.” The role of woman, of the “feminine gender,” is thus more closely linked to “sex,” to “the body.” This makes woman an “inferior gender.” (Quijano 2007, 53)

In effect, this idea was propagated in European art from the late fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The semi-nude depictions of the inhabitants of the Americas, a central motif in western European artwork, was the *de facto* image of the people of these territories (Blanchard et al. 2018). Nudity indicated the “savagery,” sexual freedom, and inferiority of the indigenous people encountered by European invaders (Cano 2003). During the sixteenth century, and into the seventeenth century, this imagery began to shift to an idealized indigenous aesthetic, typified by the “noble savage” characterizations in the literary work of Europeans figures such Michel de Montaigne. Simultaneously, the iconicity of a semi-nude woman as symbol for the Americas was effectively being cemented through the works of artists including Peter Mason, Albert Eckhout, and through the allegorical iconography of Cesare Ripa (Böetsch and Thomas 2018, 64).

The naturalization of indigenous women, and the feminization of nature/territory, was epitomized in Dutch artist Jan van der Straet’s late sixteenth century drawing *Discovery of America: Vespucci Landing in America*, shown in figure 2.

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11 This instance, like Quijano’s (2000) broader “coloniality of power” framework, demonstrates some of the limitations of Quijano’s treatment of gender and sex. Lugones (2007) offers a vital critique of how Quijano views gender through a heterosexualist lens that failed to adequately historicize the concept.
Van de Straet’s allegorical pen strokes cohered an ideology that gendered (feminized) nature. In his drawing, the languid, almost starry-eyed, indigenous woman on a hammock receives the white, male European. The sailor, Vespucci, has a firm, upright stance—indeed, he has already laid stake to the land with his banner. “America,” as a territory personified by an indigenous woman, appears passive and signals the way to the explorer. The nearly 450-year old illustration wholly captures the ideological *continuum* constructed by European ontological paradigms.
between geographic territory and women’s bodies. European invaders’ relation of domination toward nature was normalized and extended to the land-indigenous-bodies.

Colonial-Modern Epistemes: A Christian Capitalist Science

As the modernity/coloniality research group (Escobar 2004) has argued, modernity must be simultaneously comprehended through its complement: coloniality. Understanding today’s globalized configurations of power from the perspective of coloniality means centering European historical narratives. This position takes as its point of departure the knowledge that racism was enacted as a “presumptuous ‘model’ of ideal humanity…according to the perception of Christian, White, and European males” (Mignolo 2005, 15; emphasis added). We are reminded that modernity/coloniality arises from a religious agenda in which Christianity is implicated in the colonial matrix of power established through colonialism. The papal bulls from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marked “the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit…[and] established the links between faith, land possession, and the massive exploitation of labor…in the Americas, in mines as well as in the plantations producing for the global market” (Mignolo 2005, 31). The appropriation of land and territorial dispossession of native populations was a church-sanctioned endeavor implemented through institutionalized racism. Mercantile colonialism would provide for the accumulation of wealth in the Anglo-European coffers that fueled the industrial phase of early capitalism (see Abu-Lughod 1989; Mignolo

12 Anne McClintock writes the following about Columbus’ description of the journey to the Americas: “Columbus’ image feminizes the earth as a cosmic breast, in relation to which the epic male hero is a tiny, lost infant, yearning for the Edenic nipple…the female body is figured as marking the boundary of the cosmos and the limits of the known world, enclosing the ragged men” (1995, 22). Not so different from the imaginations about the lone ethnographer exploring, uncovering, and knowing truths about other societies. A disciplinary ethos still reproduced today albeit in new forms.

13 Coloniality is “the logic of domination in the modern/colonial world” built from colonial control and appropriation of land, labor, sexuality, and knowledge through regimes of racialization and genderization (Mignolo 2005, 7).
The manner of this appropriation set the stage for the hegemonic model of patriarchal capitalism being shaped.

The patriarchal masculine gaze that shaped the development of science concomitantly informed the emergence of capitalism. Arturo Escobar (1999) specifies this connection through the term “capitalist nature.” The domination of nature was a key principle of rationality and white, Christian, European (male) supremacy. Capitalism, by extent, implicated the commodification of nature, making “the production of nature…the dominant reality” (Escobar 1999, 7). In other words, the commodification and construction of nature became a hegemonic regime of reality (N. Smith 1984) that essentialized the notion of the (capitalist) economy (Gibson-Graham 1996). As a modern/colonial epistemological category, capitalist nature is an integral feature of “patriarchal capitalist modernity” (Escobar 1999, 7). Nature and land, as objectified through this modern/colonial paradigm, is fit to be commodified, not only through individualist property regimes, but also through religious ethics that subject the land to (hu)man’s work in order to improve it (see Weber 2001). In other words, the commodification of nature occurs “through the mediation of labor” whereby “nature became a universal means of production” (Escobar 1999, 6-7).

The development of science and capitalism are interrelated processes originating from a common historical lineage which produced nature as an object to be acted upon in a number of precise ways. In other words, the externalized biophysical ecologies constructed by the scientific-capitalist Subject were apprehended as objects fit for domination. In this light, the domination of the earth, the taming of nature, the exploitation and objectification of the land, are different ways of capturing what is in essence a hegemonic ontology of (white) male supremacy.
This ontology continues to organize modalities of state violence exerted on defensorxs and their territories.

**Theorizing Women’s Defense: The Body as a Site of Struggle**

The anchor of this dissertation is how women experientially live through processes of extractivism. My analysis proposes the use of *cuerpo territorio* as an analytical category: the body and territory as mutually constitutive sites of affect-space-being predicated on historical structuring that bind the body and territory as extensions of one another. This allows me to engage with and articulate together several notions: the body, territory, patriarchy, capitalism, and extractivism. I draw upon perspectives and literatures that deal with these topics as concepts in ways that are relevant to defensoras’ politics and experiences. Therefore, my treatment of these topics is not exhaustive. Rather, it is an approach that brings together threads into a provisional web that nonetheless establishes general observations about present-day relations of power and domination which come to be inscribed on women’s bodies and territories.

The notion of *cuerpo territorio* builds on stems from the work of the Asociación de Mujeres indígenas de Sta. María of Xalapán Mountain in Guatemala. Gaining visibility through the Association’s most prominent member, the maya-xinka communitarian feminist Lorena Cabnal, this notion coheres in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Cabnal (2010) presents this idea, which she terms “territorio cuerpo tierra” (territory body land), as a political call coming from indigenous women’s reality when faced with ancestral and western patriarchal structures.

Cabnal elicits an explicit distinction between feminism coming from indigenous experience and that which originates within North Anglo-European academies. Cabnal’s
communitarian feminism spotlights patriarchal orders found in “millenarian” indigenous civilizations that pre-existed European colonization in the Americas. For indigenous women, this has meant creating proper forms of feminism that account for the historical production of their position within communities with patriarchal heteronormative cosmogonies that were transformed and compounded with the European invasion.14

“Territorio cuerpo tierra” recognizes that our first territory, to be recovered and defended, is the body, also referred to as the territory body (territorio cuerpo) (Cabnal 2010, 22). Land as a territory (territorio tierra) has historically been a more visible site of struggle for indigenous communities. Indeed, the most pressing forms of erasure and dispossession indigenous groups across the Americas endure are extractive development projects in their territories. These two territories are integrated in the idea of “territorio cuerpo tierra”:

En el planteamiento de recuperación y defensa histórica de mi territorio cuerpo tierra asumo la recuperación de mi cuerpo expropiado, para generarle vida, alegría vitalidad, placeres y construcción de saberes liberadores para la toma de decisiones y esta potencia la junto con la defensa de mi territorio tierra, porque no concibo este cuerpo de mujer, sin un espacio en la tierra que dignifique mi existencia, y promueva mi vida en plenitud.

14 This contention is also echoed by Third Worldist, Black, and women of color feminists who understand that the multiple forms of women’s oppression cannot solely be reduced to the patriarchy or gendered oppression. Similarly, Anne McClintock, in historicizing British imperialism’s role in the creation of modern gender regimes, emphasizes The continuing weight of male economic self-interest and the varied undertows of patriarchal Christianity, Confucianism and Islamic fundamentalism continue to legitimize women’s barred access to the corridors of political and economic power, their persistent educational disadvantage, the domestic double workday, unequal childcare, gendered malnutrition, sexual violence, genital mutilation and domestic battery. The histories of these male policies, while deeply implicated in colonialism, are not reducible to colonialism and cannot be understood without distinct theories of gender power. (1995, 14)
Eliciting a direct connection between the body, specifically women’s bodies, and the land, the framework of “territorio cuerpo tierra” connects the territories of the body and the land on two levels. The first is through parallel subjugated positions vis-à-vis the same confluence of patriarchal forces of violence and oppression. Therefore, there is an established continuum in the patriarchal mechanisms of domination which extract from the land (earth) and subordinate women. Secondly, Cabnal posits the impossibility of living a dignified life through the liberation of her body without securing a place where she might live plentifullly. The defense of land is also about access to spaces where we can live together in the fullest sense.

Rocío Silva Santisteban, a human rights advocate and activist-scholar who has written about Peruvian defensoras’ experiences in ecoterritorial conflicts, draws the same parallel between the body and the territory as Cabnal. Silva Santisteban was involved with the anti-extractivist movement in Cajamarca in the 2010s and has continued working with and accompanying defensores in the aftermath of the social conflict. After my move from Cajamarca to Lima in September, I attended the launch of Santisteban’s book, *Mujeres y Conflictos Ecoterritoriales: Impactos, Estrategias, Resistencias*. In this text, Silva Santisteban provides a diagnostic account for the manifold layers that factor into ecoterritorial women defenders’ lives.

15 “In the proposal for the recovery and historical defense of my territory body land I assume the reclamation of y expropriated body, to generate in it life, vitality happiness, pleasures and the construction of liberating knowledges for decision-making and I unite this power with the defense of my territory land, because I do not conceive of [a] woman’s body, without a space on earth that does not dignify my existence, and promotes my life in plenitude. Historic and oppressive violences exist as much for my first territory body, as for my historical territory, the earth/land.”
as political actors. Through what Silva Santisteban (2017, 35) calls the “mujer-territorio” (woman-territory) link, she explicitly links territory to women’s bodies. It is worth noting how Silva Santisteban’s term coincides with Cabnal’s “territorio cuerpo tierra.”

Silva Santisteban proposes a connection between women’s bodies and their territories as analogous spaces where extractivism lays siege through the same mechanisms of heteropatriarchal capitalist domination. Silva Santisteban’s rendition, like Cabnal’s political call, refers to a link created by a common relationship to extractivism.

En tanto que, por nuestra condición de mujeres, las defensoras enfrentamos mayores riesgos; la idea de esta investigación es reflexionar sobre lo que implica plantear, desde la cultura de las mujeres latinoamericanas y peruanas, resistencias y liderazgos para disentir con una propuesta propia de este extractivismo colonialista y patriarcal. Nos interesa profundizar en el vínculo que existe entre los cuerpos y los territorios en el sentido de ser espacios vulnerables donde el modelo extractivista impone sus reglas y jerarquías, teniendo como marco de análisis las relaciones entre patriarcado, machismo, capitalismo por despojo y empresas extractivas en una sociedad profundamente desigual como el Perú, tan

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16 Silva Santisteban’s investigation of the effects of ecoterritorial conflict and activism in defensoras’ lives was funded as part of a grant allocated through the partnership of the Spanish government and Peru through a proposal presented by national and international NGOs (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, DEMUS, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Entrepueblos, and AIETI). This foreign aid came in the form of a partnership grant (“Convenio AECID 14-CO1-192”) which has also permitted the aforementioned NGOs to fund the work of compañeras in Cajamarca. For example, the workshops in Celendín I refer to in the rest of this chapter are funded through this grant.

The Spanish agency that oversees this aid is the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID), whose stated mission is “orientada a la lucha contra la pobreza y al desarrollo humano sostenible” (oriented toward fighting against poverty and toward sustainable human development) (http://www.aecid.pe/aecid-en-peru/presentacion#XebMEL97mS4). Thus, this particular type of aid rests on “cooperation” between states—ostensibly not a one-sided project. This puts the central state in a thorny position which confirms the heterogeneity of a state bureaucracy, and evinces how Peru’s government maneuvers to maintain foreign aid when some of its offices may be undermining the stated goals of such aid projects.
proclive a las diversas violencias contra las mujeres.  

Silva Santisteban makes a number of critical points in this excerpt. She maintains the centrality of perspective by women in Latin America and Peru as key to any critique on the subject, a fundamental position shared by other decolonizing feminisms coming out of Latin America (e.g., Cejas 2011; Espinosa Miñoso 2010; Espinosa Miñoso, Gómez Correal, and Ochoa Muñoz 2014b; Gargallo 2014). Silva Santisteban also alludes to the ties between a patriarchal order and extractivism. What I highlight in this citation is Silva Santisteban’s sense for how women’s bodies and the territories they defend are subjugated by a common structure (the extractive model).

Most of my collaborators, both in Cajamarca and in Celendín, did not talk about their participation in the struggle through the concept of *cuerpo territorio* or through similar terms that conjoined the two notions, as Cabnal and Silva Santisteban do. The sporadic occurrences when the symbolic tie was made explicit was almost exclusively limited to workshops and meetings coordinated by NGOs. Significantly, the compañeras who participate in these workshops are being groomed to adopt identities as ecoterritorial and human rights defenders. Because, from an international lens, women’s rights are ensconced within human rights, these NGOs are able to support defensoras’ claims to protection and liberty to exercise their politics. The aid that the Spanish government provides through its foreign aid grant (the “Convenio AECID 14-CO1-

17 “As long as, because of our condition as women, women defenders face greater risks; the idea behind this investigation is to reflect on the implication of laying out, from Latin American and Peruvian women’s culture, resistances and leaderships for dissent with our own proposal regarding patriarchal and colonial extractivism. We are interested in digging deeper into the link that exists between bodies and territories in the sense of being vulnerable spaces where the extractivist model imposes its rules and hierarchies, [while] maintaining as a frame of analysis the relationship between patriarchy, machismo, capitalism through dispossession, and extractive corporations in a profoundly unequal society like Peru, so prone to diverse forms of violence against women.”
192”) sustains women’s politicization. However, it does so as long as the workshops further the strengthening of civil society in order to support the basic rights of women, indigenous peoples, and human rights defenders. Encuentros and workshops are sites of “capacitación” (training) where compañeras learn the rhetoric of human rights and conceptual discourse, such as cuerpos y territorios, as part of their political formation as defensoras.

In their daily conversations, my collaborators seldom stated that theirs was a struggle to defend their bodies. This does not mean that women did not have an awareness of the multiple registers of violence employed by extractivist projects, the central government apparatus, and the movement itself, against their bodies. Women knew, as the saying goes, “en carne propia” (in the flesh) what it has meant for their bodies to have become politicized—and also what being women in machista sociopolitical environments entails. Instead, the singular emphasis of their defense reflects how compañeras do not conceptualize the struggle as one anchored in their bodies. The NGOs, nonetheless, asked women to consciously position both notions as equals in their struggle.

As Silva Santisteaban noted, the link between the body and the territory is, at the very least, symbolically manifest. This framing, like Cabnal’s, differs from the conceptualization I propose in this chapter, whereby we might come to understand the body as a metonym for territory. Decolonial feminist perspectives conceptualize the body and territory as interwoven sites of struggle, and therefore inextricably linked. In other words, to speak of the defense of the territory is to speak both and about the body and (land) territory. In articulating the relation between the body and territory in this way, we may begin moving toward conceptualizing body-territory as an analytical category. Delmy Cruz Hernández suggests that this proposition may begin with seeing body territories as living and historical territories and land territories as
“cuerpos sociales” (2016, 44; social bodies). As an analytical category, cuerpo territorio (body territory), requires comprehending the body as the territory and the territory as the body. Violence against one is violence against the other. Defending one implies the defense of the other. As such, women’s bodies through the doubling and tripling of oppressions brought onto them represent an extension of the geospatial territory.18

“La idea es rescatar que las luchas por el territorio deben ir acompañadas de las luchas por nuestros cuerpos”19 - Delmy Tania Cruz Hernández, “Cartografías corporales”

Indigenous feminist Delmy Tania Cruz Hernández positions the discussion to conceptualize “cuerpos-territorios” as a move that “Surea” (Southernizes): re-focusing the Global South, and specifically Latin America and the Caribbean, as the location of epistemic enunciation. This is what transfeminist scholar Sayak Valencia means when she remarks, “la posición del sur como un posicionamiento crítico” (the position of the south as a critical positioning) (2014). Not only is this an intervention against the epistemic violence of the erasure of indigenous epistemologies, it is a positioning that indicates the Latin American and Caribbean indigenous origin of this notion (Cruz Hernández 2017, 38). Theorizing the concept of cuerpo territorio entails illuminating its roots as a political call to action and the disciplinary feminist analyses of the body and territory that preceded its emergence in the early twenty-first century (Cruz Hernández 2017).

18 My analysis and use of cuerpo territorio does not fully capture the complexity of relations in a territorial cosmogony where people are one piece in a broader network of relationships between living and non-living beings as de la Cadena (2015) and Blaser (2010), among others, have cogently argued. Nevertheless, cuerpo territorio allows for the recognition of our relational being-ness in the world, even if the scope of this dissertation does not address this dimension.

19 “The idea is to rescue that struggles for the territory should be accompanied by the struggles for our bodies.”
Spatial Politics of the Body and Gendered Subjectivity

There is a long-established history in gender and sexuality studies in the Global North academies on the politics of the body (e.g., Butler 1993). The ‘personal is political’ gestures toward the intimate domains in which politics enters and partakes in. From colonial critiques, we receive nuanced understandings of how the intimacy at the breast of the colony helped forge the racialized and genderized hierarchies of imperialism (see McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995; 2002). Perhaps most explicitly articulated in queer agency (e.g., Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998), the body is a site in which the making and mediation of non-heteronormative expressions of gender and sexuality are actively confronting the oppressive force of normative social expectations. In a sense, this means that the body, as a fraught site, is also spatially constructed.

Attending to how relations of power are embedded in place, feminist geographers of in the Global North conceptualize territory as a structural and structured place where feminine bodies also exist as social constructions. In this particular tradition, Massey’s (2005) study of the body-space connection emphasizes how space is constructed through relations of power and knowledge. Similarly, McDowell (1999) invites revisiting ideological distinctions of space through dichotomies, such as public and private, to demonstrate that bodies are differentially situated in space. This means recognizing gender not as a given thing serving as a starting point, but as a constructed set of relations and material practices from which follow experiences of extractivism, the state, and so forth.

Latin American feminist Alicia Lindón (2012) offers a compelling argument that more explicitly refers to an understanding the body as structured through her notion of “corporalidad” (corporality). The idea of the territory as structured and structural is inherent in the political calls
of Latin American decolonial feminisms that position the body in analogous terms. Cruz Hernández succinctly summarizes this premise: “el cuerpo visto como territorio es en sí mismo un espacio, un territorio-lugar, que ocupa, además, un espacio en el mundo y puede vivenciar todas las emociones, sensaciones y reacciones físicas, para encontrar en él, un lugar de ‘resistencia’ y resignificación” (2017, 42). The body is, thus, also already territory. Indeed, Cruz Hernández argues, “nuestro cuerpo es el primer territorio de lucha” (2017, 43).

The idea of “corporalidad,” which implies the constructedness of the body, helps us to see defensoras’ political identities as fundamentally rooted in the relational processes taking place when and where defensoras show up. Lindón conceptualizes subjectivity as follows: “se configura con cada experiencia vivida por el sujeto social, y adquiere potencialidad constructora de la realidad socio-espacial cada vez que los sujetos la movilizan en su cotidiano actuar en el mundo” (691). This definition evinces both the agentive and proscribed nature of subjectivities. Subjectification of the individual occurs through social processes, structuring, and the potential inherent in each being. Thus, vectors of difference and their associated discourses are not simply imposed but “govern” (Butler 1993) the structure of how subjects are socially (and relationally) made. Taken together, these lines of thinking lead me to pay particular attention to defensoras’ everyday lives, as I do in chapter four. Every encounter, meeting, training, mobilization, and so on, is a new opportunity to modify discourses and transform their subjective identities.22

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20 “The body seen as territory is in itself a space, a territory-place, that occupies, moreover, a space in the world and can experience all the emotions, sensations, and physical reactions against it, a place of ‘resistance’ and resignification.”
21 “Our body is the first territory of struggle.”
22 Lindón states that “el cuerpo se localiza siempre en algún locus” (the body is always localized in a locus), requiring us to pay attention to place and spatialization in studies of the body (2012, 689). Lindón prefers the term subject-body to emphasize this relationship, highlighting that a subjectivity is attached to a material and affective body. In response to social geography’s take on spatiality and subjects, Lindón reminds us that spatial practices are
As Eva Vázquez (2017), another member of the collective Cruz Hernández co-founded, argues, the logic of domination entails the appropriation of bodies. Specifically, it is the appropriation of the bodies of others—that is, the marked bodies that emerged from colonial and imperial relations. The discussion of the preceding section on the colonial underpinnings of capitalist ideologies of gendered “nature” attests to this point. The work of Diane Nelson (1999) echoes this perspective on how bodies come to be (made) in the postcolonial and postconflict context of Guatemala. Nelson, building on Butler’s (1993) theorizations, reminds us that “bodies are constructed (and undone) over time and through iteration” (1999, 210). Here, I am emphasizing the connection between the body and the territory, making it clear that women eco-territorial activists adopting the notion of *cuerpo territorio* conceive of their corporeal body as tethered to the territory and susceptible to similar forms of domination.

*Cuerpo territorio* represents an orientation that identifies extractivism as a neocolonial mechanism of dispossession, domination, and capitalism that “re-patriarchalizes” (Vázquez 2017) the territory. A patriarchalized territory refers to the comprehensive whole of patriarchal relations constituting a system of oppression in its territorial dimension. Importantly, this is distinct from the masculinization of spaces, which refers to the preponderance of men in a space within a territory, often involving the subjugation of women or the reinforcement of gender hierarchies (Vázquez 2017). While the gendered aspect of extractive industries is an important dimension of extractivism, with a growing literature on it (e.g., Jenkins 2014; Lahiri-Dutt and Macintyre 2006; Maldar 2011; Orozco Zevallos 2013; Rolston 2014), this is not the principal focus of this dissertation. To talk about “cuerpos y territorios” is to show through a series of accounts (ranging from topics of state violence to legal domains to the spaces of the struggle) not just about *bodily practices in space*, but, importantly, also about subjectively accessing space which includes “*la corporalidad y las emociones*” (corporality and emotions) (690).
about how women’s defense of the cuerpo territorio is materialized in their lives. I, thus, depict how extractivism is writ on their multiple territories.

Women’s ecoterritorial defense in Cajamarca enacts a decolonial feminist politics and praxis critiquing the heteropatriarchal racial regimes of power sustaining extractivism. Defensoras’ decision to self-organize and assert themselves as political actors in spite of machismo is a double-move that recognizes and rejects these structures of power. To get to this decolonial positioning, whether or not defensoras conceptualize it through a cuerpo territorio analytic, my collaborators experience the extractive frontier as a modality of modern/colonial relations of domination.

Ultimately, this dissertation deals with relationality and the workings of structures of power. Conflictive fields of opposition and the relational quality of bodies, ideas, and spaces are ideas that I ethnographically moor by demonstrating how extractivism becomes writ on the cuerpo territorio and how women exercise agentive power through their politicization. This is as much an investigation on statecraft at the extractive frontier as on the “contested subjectivities…[that are] asserted as politically legitimate” (Stephen 2013) through the practices and political presence of defensoras.

Organization

The dissertation is organized by magnitudes of scale. Chapters two and three depict the (trans)national dimensions of extractive governance and defense of the cuerpo territorio. These are discussions of the politics of extractivism attending to the domestic and transnational economic and legal circuits where ecoterritorial conflicts unfold. Chapter two explores the extractive security state, a term I define as a developmentalist government anchored in an
extractivist economic model enforced through state security mechanisms. This chapter outlines the state’s use of coercive force to repress dissent through modalities of state violence underpinned by what Anibal Quijano (2000) refers to as the “coloniality of power.” I explore continuities in militarized state repression through the notion of “continuum,” highlighting how masculinized domination persists as a recurring feature of conflict violence. Here, we begin to see how and when women’s bodies come to matter to the state.

Chapter three looks at institutional violence and what is commonly understood as the criminalization of protest. Political legal persecution is an organizing theme for this discussion centered on how ecoterritorial politics are judicilized. I hone in on how the judicialization of politics and the creation of paradoxes in the “Rule of Law” underlie the legal marginalization of defensorxs. I examine the sociopolitical field of the extractivist legal terrain through the discourse of the law (legislation) and the micro-scalar intersubjective relations in a courtroom. I show how judicialization pulls together vectors of oppression to intensify repression and generate an uneven justice system that is differentially experienced by rural women and men.

In chapter four, I examine how extractivism and ecoterritorial conflicts transform gendered roles and codes of behavior. The ethnographic examples I present demonstrate the extent to which local gendered concepts (machismo) mold the terrain of struggle in these conflicts revealing that power is stratified, particularly through gender, within the struggle. This chapter is also about defensoras “surviv[ing] and mak[ing] anew within zones of extractive capitalism” (Gómez-Barris 2017, ix). In other words, how their lives reflect the racialized heteropatriarchal logics that inform the extractive frontier. The fraught interstitial spaces in which they assert their agency exemplify the connection between extractivism and capitalist
patriarchy and importance of studying capitalism, racial categorizations, and heteronormativity together when we try to understand the power of global capitalism.

I switch gears in chapter five by displacing ethnographic analysis with the testimonios of three collaborators from Celendín. My feminist decolonial theoretico-praxis resurfaces following scholarly critiques of cultural area studies to challenge “the colonizing power of disciplinary knowledge” (Gómez-Barris 2017, 10). I push the boundaries of anthropological knowledge by writing in nonnormative ways that are distinct from literary and reflexive anthropological traditions. This is a venture into queering the discipline by horizontalizing the knowledge created through the collaboratively produced stories of defensoras.

I conclude by taking a cue from indigenous scholar-activists (e.g., Estes 2019; Simpson 2007) by re-framing my collaborators’ activism as a struggle for instead of simply as a movement about resistance to. Resistance implies a reactionary condition and reduces luchadorxs’ struggle to mere opposition. The former perspective acknowledges the place defensorxs are in presently; an orientation toward a horizon (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2014) or a potentiated present (Muñoz 2009). In other words, their defense of water and territories is a fight for another world, and another future.
Chapter 2

The Extractive Security State: 
Chronicles of the Present, Common Histories, 
and “Continuums of Violence”

When I sat down with Eugenia in an unoccupied room off the courtyard of San Francisco Church in Cajamarca, we barely knew each other. It was 2014 and I conducting interviews with the legal institute from Lima. We pulled a couple of chairs from the perimeter of the room – clearly this ample space was used for the church’s large activities – and faced each other. Dim light entered the opaque glass of the windows, but otherwise we were in the shadows. The interview began as soon as Isabel, the legal institute’s social communicator, had finished setting up the recording equipment.

Like the other interviews I conducted that season, we followed the interview protocol I had developed in conjunction with the legal team in Lima. I asked Eugenia about where she was from and whom she lived with. Eugenia is from Jadibamba, a centros poblados (small village) located in the province of Celendín, where her parents and grandparents were also born. Eugenia was born into a family of ronderos, and when she turned eighteen, she also formally joined her community’s rondas campesinas. Eugenia’s father, a rondero and the director of the local elementary school, is a well-regarded leader in the community. Their family lives off of farming and cattle-raising (ganadería). Eugenia now splits her time between Jadibamba and Cajamarca,
where she completed her high school education and obtained vocational training in computer processing and apparel manufacturing.

The rondas campesinas in her community have been mobilized against mining since the struggle against the Quilish Mountain expansion in 2004. At the time of the interview, Eugenia was the secretary of the rondas femeninas (women’s rounds) and the president of management (presidencia de gestión) of Jadibamba. As a rondera, Eugenia participated in the diligencias (errands) to the lakes, where ronderos and other defenders set up camp as “guardians of the lakes” to keep watch over the mining company’s activities near the headwaters. Eugenia recounted three experiences she had with the police.

Tuve yo tres represiones. Una cuando bajamos acá, en Cajamarca. Fue en...2012, en julio, cuando la policía se ofuscó mucho y nos disparó. Y a mi me entró un perdigón y estaba mal cuatro meses. En mi pierna aún quedan las señales. Y luego la otra fue el 18 de marzo en la [lago] Mamacocha, junto al compañero Edy Benavides. Es en el 2014, de este año ha sido. Fuimos reprimidos. El campamento de los guardianes les fue quemado. Nuestras comidas, nuestros fiambreros. Todo fueron quemados, no? La policía y la DINOES actúó de manera demasiado fuerte. Dispararon, nos seguían dos a tres horas de represión, no? Y nos siguieron hasta el centro poblado El Alumbre. Y sí recuerdo una compañera de Bambamarca, no recuerdo bien el nombre, cuando alzo la voz y que dijo que estaban en jurisdicción ronderíl y la policía no podía, no, seguir causando mucho abuso. Levantamos las tranqueras y la policía se detuvo y se puso a retirarse.

1 A diligencia entails traveling up to the lakes and construction sites to survey the advancement of the mining operations.
2 “I suffered [through] three repressions. One was when we came down here to Cajamarca. It was in...2012, in July, when the police was bewildered and shot us. I was hit by a rubber bullet and was badly injured for four months. My
Eugenia’s first repressive encounter occurred during the movement’s second general strike, in July 2012. Eugenia was struck by the rubber bullets the police shot at participants in the demonstrations taking place near the city center. Police attacked protestors with rubber bullets, batons, and tear gas that was even propelled into the courtyard of San Francisco Church (the very same one where I was interviewing Eugenia), where children and injured civilians had sought refuge. First-aid stations had been set up in the courtyard under the assumption that the police would not attack the church, the location of urgent medical attention. This confrontation lives on in the minds of many of defensorxs whose sense of extraordinary violation fuels an enduring outrage toward the central state.

I also got a sense of the indignation luchadorxs felt after being assaulted by the police when I interviewed Julieta in 2017. Julieta had traveled from Celendín to Cajamarca to participate in the strike. During the interview she remarked, “[la policía] ya no respetaron ni la iglesia, ya nada. Las bombas [lacrimógenas] entraron todito. Entraban a la iglesia...las bombas. Entraban adentro, encima de las carpas me acuerdo.” Julieta added that the police had broken the rules by attacking a place of faith, “los policías atacaban sin control” (the police attacked without any control). And so, the presidential decrees that had provided the country’s president with the power to instate exceptional measures permitted opposition to the Conga Mine to be forcefully and violently curbed.

3 “[The police] no longer even respected the church, nothing. The tear gas entered everywhere. The tear gas entered the church. I remember [the canisters] came in, on top of the tents.”
The militarization of the police in response to ecoterritorial conflicts reverberates throughout Peru. My collaborators lived through these episodes of militarized police repression in Celendín and Cajamarca during the strikes in 2011 and 2012, as evidenced through the kind of force implemented by the state in that period. In fact, the actual military was deployed to Celendín in July 2012. Helicopters carrying military snipers were dispatched and flew over the city center of Celendín, eventually killing four civilians. These techniques of coercive force were issued against unarmed civilians and protestors. Many of my collaborators in Celendín recounted how they defended themselves against the riot-geared police: they launched cohetes (firework rockets) at the police in their struggle to take back the streets to demonstrate and march.

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Extractive Governance

The fraught extractive frontiers where ecoterritorial conflicts are erupting in the Andes are located far from the predominantly wealthier, white and mestizo urban centers of the Peruvian coast. The structural antecedents to present-day conflicts go back to former president Fujimori’s rise to power in the 1990s and the neoliberal policies he instituted. Modifications to

4 Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) fostered ‘favorable’ conditions for investment in mining by way of reforms to tax policies, environmental regulations, and a general retreat of central state intervention through the downsizing of the central government (see de Echave 2005; Haarstad and Fløysand 2007; Bebbington et al. 2008; Hogue and Rau 2008). Fujimori’s regime also introduced a series of decrees and laws which began to undo the work of the 1969 Agrarian Reform. Supreme Decree 011-91-AG laid the path for the liberalization of property. After Fujimori’s auto-coup in 1992, a new Constitution was created in 1993 which further loosened foreign and domestic investment restrictions and continued to flexibilize property rights (e.g., Law 26505, also known as the Land Law).
property rights in conjunction with the promotion of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) led to profound changes to the social and economic landscape of the Andean countryside. On the one hand, accumulation of land by corporations was facilitated by the new property laws which encouraged land titling processes that had previously been prohibited. On the other hand, the series of policies favoring structural adjustment, privatization, foreign investment and a reorientation of the economy toward export-led growth permitted for large external investors to enter the economy (Crabtree 2002; Bury 2004; Haarstad and Fløysand 2007; Bebbington et al. 2008). Fujimori’s regime sought to court foreign investment directed primarily toward the mining and energy sectors.

Since the era of Fujimori, which ended at the turn of the twenty-first century, the central state in Peru has prioritized growth via extractive industries, a trend also observable elsewhere in Latin America. Between 1998 and 2007, the natural resources sector in Latin America received an estimated $93.5 billion. This amount represented an annual average increase in FDI of 26 percent across the region; although, for countries with smaller economies like Peru, the percentage of change in investment was in the thousands of percent (Bury and Bebbington 2013, 42). Simultaneously, increasing investment and consistent economic growth in Peru mask the unequal distribution of wealth that has accompanied rising GDP (Crabtree 2002; INEI 2014). In the context of large-scale mining in the Andes, small-scale Andean farmers who have been neglected by top-down policymaking are struggling to survive against an industry with more economic and political capital. The legal and economic scaffolding for large-scale extractive

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5 The new property laws have also enabled the expansion of industrial agriculture in the coast (Crabtree 2002).
6 As per a 2005 World Bank report, investment in mining exploration saw a 90 percent global increase between 1990 and 1997, which translated into a two thousand percent increase in Peru during this time period (Bebbington and Bury 2013).
projects of the twenty-first century set the stage for the ecoterritorial conflicts being wrought in Peru today.

In this chapter, I examine ecoterritorial conflicts through what I term the *extractive security state*, a regime of governance based on an extractivist economic development paradigm operationalized through securitizing mechanisms of control. When describing the general manner of governing (governmentality) that hinges on FDI and economic growth, rather than the specificities of the state’s security apparatus, I refer to *extractive governance*. Exploring these conflicts through the lens of the *extractive security state* enables me to bring into focus the “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000) of nation-states that become contradictory wardens of their own biopolitical goals. As the discussion in chapter three will evidence, the government’s fetishization of liberal rights generates an official biopolitical narrative about governing in the best interests of the citizenry while suppressing their rights and well-being. Thus, the repressive arm of Peru’s central state furthers its extractivist development agenda through violent exercises of control that draw on pre-existing systems of oppression.

In what follows, I offer an analysis of the extractive security state through my discussion of modalities of state violence, the notion of continuums of violence, and the biopolitics of the security paradigm in extractive governance. The first modality I explore looks at how the state strategically disperses its monopoly on legitimate violence to private firms at the extractive frontier. I then focus on the state’s use of force by centering the coloniality of violence and honing in on how race and class are interwoven threads in the way the state metes out punishment. Building on this logic of coloniality, I examine how the militarized state response to conflict reflects the colonial inheritance and reproduction of patriarchal structures of domination that hinge on “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). I also draw on the
notion of “continuum” to elaborate on the spatial, temporal, and ideological continuities of state violence. Framed in this way, I show how the security paradigm ends up anchoring the defense of impunity and coercive force under an allegedly liberal type of government. My analysis suggests that securitizing extractivism not only reterritorializes geographic terrains of extraction as sites of conflict, terror, and violence, but also indigenous and feminized bodies themselves.

Modalities of State Violence: State-Corporate Collusions

“Minas Conga,” the mine’s official name, was a $4.8 billion-dollar project between US-based Newmont Corporation and Buenaventura, a Peruvian mining company. The government-required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was approved by the central state in 2010, followed by the announcement of the project in early 2011. Conga would have represented about ten percent of Peru’s projected mining investment portfolio for the next decade and it was also the largest mining investment in Peruvian history (Li 2015, 215). It would have replaced Minera Yanacocha as the largest gold mine operation in Latin America.

By 2014, the most heated moments of resistance and mass-scale coercive repression had past. Yet, as Eugenia recounted, the use of force was still being deployed on defenders who were occupying the area by the lakes that were to be drained for the mining operation. These small-scale tactical attacks against defenders would often be carried out in concert with private company security. Repression entailed destroying defenders’ temporary encampments and food, and arresting them on trespassing charges. Conga maintained a private security force that provided the day-to-day surveillance of the mine’s construction by patrolling the construction
area and its borders in pick-up trucks. However, in the few years immediately following the first regional strike, any mobilization that brought defenders into proximity of the site drew in a police force.

The summer I worked at the legal institute, I overheard a lively conversation between two lawyers regarding the obscure agreements between Peru’s National Police and Yanacocha. This was the first time I heard about these agreements. I was intrigued, but as a newcomer I felt inhibited from asking in-depth, probing questions. The lawyers had just received an official response from a government agency denying a request for information about the contract between the police and the mining company. The government response stated that the agreement was reservado (classified), but failed to cite any law defining this categorization. The lawyers discussed what reservado could mean and whether they would be able to circumvent this shroud of secrecy by appealing to other legal mechanisms.

Before the end of my stay at the institute, I heard more about these agreements under other circumstances. One of the institute’s directors told us over lunch at a nearby Chinese-Peruvian restaurant about an incident on a trip to the proposed Conga site. The director had traveled to Cajamarca with a team to collect evidence, including photographs of the lakes and landscape at the site, for the defense of activists being harassed and criminalized by state and corporate actors. On the second day of their journey, the team stopped near one of the lakes that lies on the jalcas, mountain-top flatlands, to photographically document an archaeological sign.

\[7\] In 2014, Newmont and Buenaventura had not shut down Minas Conga. Project concessions and permits were also never officially annulled by Peru’s central government, although at various moments during legal proceedings and government review the project was temporarily suspended. Finally, in 2016, Newmont announced that it would no longer pursue the Conga mine project for lack of local political and social support.
that had been overturned, hiding the place’s designation as an archaeological site. Soon after their arrival at the site, the team was approached by police officers. Preemptively, the director had the officers identify themselves and asked who they worked for. This was a key move because it allowed the director to understand the officers’ position—and which interests they were officially supposed to uphold. Upon hearing that they were state agents, the director responded that as police officers working on behalf of the nation-state, it was their duty to protect the archaeological site and public interests. The director added that her group was on public property and, if anything, the police should be facilitating their visit. Without anything more to say, the officers departed, permitting the director’s team to continue with their activities.

The director’s questioning indexed the messy and fluid boundaries between the state and private corporations. This situation is one where economic interests overlap—that is to say, the interest to extract—albeit with distinct motivations. The central state promotes extractive projects as an avenue for achieving “development” while mining companies seek private profits. The situation at the jalca was also a concrete reminder of the sanctioned contracting of state law enforcement agents by private entities. The Peruvian National Police became a contractor to private business through a now-abrogated law (Legislative Decree 1148) that governed the structure and functions of the police. This decree, enacted by President Humala in 2012,
allowed the National Police to offer its services (prestación de servicios) to businesses in exchange for infrastructure, logistical support, and supplementary wages to the officers who were hired.10 Lawyer Ruth Luque of Cusco’s Human Rights Without Borders obtained the secretive agreements between the police and several mining companies in the Cusco region after years of pressure. For Luque, police contracting turns the National Police into mercenaries (Luque 2016). Though the private contracting of Peru’s police force began under Fujimori’s government, it continued with Alan García until Humala’s government replaced the law (Silva Santisteban 2017, 155).

Offering state agents “for sale” was both an effect and part of the economic shifts privileging free-market principles that further liberalized property regimes and government institutions in Peru. This process of outsourcing the infrastructure for maintaining law enforcement occurred in tandem with the creation of favorable conditions for foreign investment. The precarious condition of the National Police during this period of economic restructuring was supposed to be offset by potential private contracts that would supplement the police’s budget.

Periods of social upheaval, and ecoterritorial conflicts in particular, bring to focus the palpable conflicts-of-interest these private-public agreements represented in terms of governance. Whether the primary logic of a liberal republican government is protecting the public by maintaining order or maintaining order by protecting the public, the public-private agreements produced a contradiction for the nation-state. The agreements subordinated the national government’s responsibility to ensure the public’s safety, thereby creating a situation where civilians’ access to state protection was jeopardized. The central state’s response to such a

10 In the case of the Las Bambas copper mine, in the region of Apurímac, the Cusco police established an agreement with the mining company which required a monthly payment of twenty thousand Nuevos Soles (roughly six thousand dollars) to Cusco’s police department.
claim could be that under the decree’s statutes officers could only be hired when they were off-duty, and not acting as representatives of the state. Such a situation would theoretically annul a conflict of officer’s duties. This form of liberalizing the police force, however, enabled moments of slippage that served state-corporate interests.

Extractive governance, therefore, operates through modes of power that mesh the public with the private at the service of the growth of extractive industries. In the everyday interactions that took place between defenders and police-mining security personnel, partialities among police officers that occupied both roles may have led to discriminatory repression of defenders. Hence the Institute director’s quick appraisal of the situation at the archaeological site and her interrogation of the officers’ station. In having been compelled to admit they were state agents, the officers were placed in the position of protecting citizens and constitutional principles. These public-private partnerships represented a source of income for local police departments and officers who might have wanted to ensure the continuation of the contracts by pleasing the client. Agreements between the police and extractive industry corporations allowed the latter direct and closer communication and coordination with police chiefs than any private entity should have if all things are equal.

But all things were not equal. The privatization of the police force for the benefit of a (neo)liberalizing government structure materialized the overlapping motivations of the central state and Yanacocha/Conga to extract minerals. In this scenario, the use of force, whether under the direction of the state or the mine, continued to operate through the colonial relations of domination upon which Latin America’s republics were founded and which underpin the extractive security state. It is here, at the hazy limits of private and public practices of
securitization, where we catch glimpses of new forms of militarization propelled by the capitalism-patriarchy \((\text{capitalismo-patriarcado})\) axis of state power.

Modalities of State Violence: Coloniality of Repression

In November 2011, social tensions concerning the project escalated when the newly-elected regional president, Gregorio Santos, proclaimed a regional \(\text{paro}\) (strike). This would be the first of two major strikes, both of which were met with officially-declared states of emergency. In early December 2011, President Humala, still in the beginning of his presidency, enacted a state of emergency in Cajamarca that lasted sixty days and suspended the regular transfer of funds to the regional government. This emergency, along with the one in July 2012 that we hear about from Julieta and Eugenia, entailed the used of militarized law enforcement.

Julieta and Eugenia agree that the police employed a disproportionate use of force during the strikes. The police tear gassed Cajamarca before pursuing activists for hours through the streets. Defenders and protestors were unarmed civilians being pursued by police officers armed with rubber bullets. In Celendín, repression entailed the use of live ammunition which led to four civilian deaths. When I saw Eugenia in 2017, she still bore the scars from a rubber bullet injury. The third incident of aggression Eugenia endured in the hands the police occurred scarcely two months before I met her in 2014. From this encounter, in which the police took her camera, Eugenia faced indictments.

Estaba junto al compañero Manuel Ramos y Milton Sánchez, a quien la policía también lo cogió. Trató de amedrentarlo y yo por ayudarle, a decir “¿pues qué?” [Y] a grabar mas que todo porque estaba con mi cámara. Yo filmaba todo, y ellos se percataron de eso y ellos me detienen. Ahí me detuvieron, y ahora afrontando estos juicios, no?...Cuatro
policías dicen que yo les he atacado a ellos, que le he roto el casco, que les he roto el brazo. Pero en ningún momento porque yo he estado tomando a esa hora las fotos, filmando, todo, cuando ellos se ofuscaron; rompieron las cabezas de nuestros compañeros, dispararon, hablaban muchas groserías, no? Y también lo que me molestó mucho fue que ellos trataban de humillarnos cuando nos cogieron. O sea, decían, “oye, y cómo, dónde, y cuándo, has estudiado?” “¿De qué parte eres?” y miles de cosas. Como pisotear nuestros derechos, no? Y se burlaban.11

The violent repression of anti-extractive resistance includes ridicule with racialized class undertones. The police mocked the defensorxs through their skepticism about their levels of education. Such jeers were meant to subordinate her as an inferior subject of the state, drawing on the colonial history in the Andean region. This manner of violence derives meaning from the coloniality of the extractive security state. The “coloniality of power” is predicated on the racial and gendered colonial division of labor which paved the way for the Eurocentric control of global capitalism (Quijano 2000; Lugones 2007).12 Thus, the racial hierarchies created during colonization continue to shape contemporary state-making projects functioning in the service of global capital. Eugenia’s indigenous heritage, and rural background, positioned her as second-class citizen in the eyes of a state embodied in police officers. The provincial and rural

11 “I was there with compañero Manuel Ramos and Milton Sanchez, whom the police had also captured. [She] tried to intimidate him and I, trying to help him, said ‘so what?’ [And] to record, mostly because I had my camera with me. I was filming everything, and they noticed that and they detained me. They held me there, and now I’m facing these trials, no?...Four police officers say that I attacked them, that I broke one of their helmets, that I broke one of their arms. But at no point because I was taking pictures at that time, filming, everything, when they became bewildered; [they] broke our compañeros’ heads, shot [at us], they said a lot of swear words, no? And, also, what bothered me a lot was that they tried to humiliate us when they caught us. I mean, they said, ‘hey, so how, where, and when have you studied?’ ‘Where are you from?’ and thousands of other things. Like walking all over our rights, no? And they ridiculed us.”

12 Quijano understands capital to be socially-formed and a key axis of labor control under capitalism. European colonization positioned white, male European, and later U.S., elites to concentrate control of global capital, and thus propelled the world dominance of capitalism as a particular economic system based on relations of production (2000, 551).
background of defensorxs affords the police feelings of superiority, regardless of whether the officers are also from the countryside. The police uniform allowed officers to abjure their background and to subjugate non-white, provincial state subjects.

Moreover, before Eugenia was arrested, a female officer searched her repeatedly while the other officers continued hurling derisions at her and her compañeros.

Me requisó tres veces una policía...Quería provocarme para que yo reaccione. Pero yo, o sea, sabía lo que estaba haciendo y me trataba de calmar porque tenía que hacer lo correcto...trataba de humillarnos. Decía, “¿Qué ustedes han estudiado? Ustedes tienen superior?” Y se burlaba de nosotros la policía, y eso es lo que me dolía más porque yo quería contestarle “¿Y bueno?” Por muchas cosas luego me callé un poco. Pero luego llegaron los cuatro policías y dijeron “se hizo una acta.” Y nos querían hacer que firmemos. Le dijimos que no porque tiene que estar presente nuestra abogada o nuestro abogado, y nos negamos. Y, bueno, ellos decían: “Peor para ustedes. Se les va a trasladar hasta Chiclayo. Y ahí verán las consecuencias.” “Y especialmente tú,” me decía, “porque tú me has atacado.” Y yo le decía: “Señor, en ningún momento he estado junto a usted. Han sido otros los que me han capturado y sin embargo usted viene a denunciar que yo le he atacado a usted.” 13

13 “A woman police officer searched me three times...She wanted to provoke me so that I would react. But I, I mean, I knew what she was doing and I tried to calm myself because I had to do what was correct...[she] tried to humiliate us. She said, ‘What, you [all] have studied? You have secondary education?’ And she mocked us, and that is what hurt me most because I wanted to reply to her ‘So what?’ For many reasons I later shut up a bit. But then four officers arrived and said, ‘an act has been drafted.’ And they wanted to make us sign it. We told them no because our lawyer needed to be present, so we refused. And, well, they said: ‘Worse for you [all]. You will be transferred to Chiclayo. And you’ll see the consequences.’ ‘And especially you,’ he told me, ‘because you attacked me.’ And I said: ‘Sir, at no time was I near you. It was others who captured me and still you come to charge me with having attacked you.’”
Eugenia bit her tongue as the female officer taunted her. She had wanted to respond to the affront by the officer, to demonstrate that she was a *campesina* (woman farmer) who had graduated high school. Eugenia was silenced against the indignities hurled by the racist officers because she understood that replying to their taunts would result in more violence and further charges.

In the era of extractive governance, repressive state agendas represent a new form of control against anti-extractivist movements. Indeed, these patterns of repressing ecoterritorial dissent are indicative of emerging state-making security techniques dependent on renewed militarization and colonially-founded forms of oppression. Hence, Eugenia was shamed for having transgressed the boundaries of a subjectivity for rural, non-mestiza women. The racialized goading that Eugenia and her compañeros received paralleled the insults that soldiers used on indigenous Andean populations during the internal armed conflict in the 1980s and 90s. Today, contemporary social conflicts look like the anti-Conga struggle. The degree of violence and repression with which the central state met the mobilizations against Conga suggests that the new threat, real and imagined, to the state is not communism but opposition to extractive industries.

Modalities of State Violence: Corporeal Territorializations

My collaborators would often omit details about sexualized harassment they experienced in police custody, but every once in a while they would briefly mention it as they moved along with the broader topic of conversation. An unaware observer might take that brevity for a casual attitude toward sexualized (state) violence, but my time with defensorxs taught me that any public accounting of sexual (mis)conduct was a source of shame. Indeed, during my interview with Eugenia in 2014, she did not mention that the female officer who had searched her three
times had also squeezed her chest more forcefully on each subsequent search. She told me this off the record, and she brought it up a couple of times since that interview in private spaces with people she knew well. Eugenia’s omission was not an exceptional occurrence. Sexual violence can be the cause for social stigma and public and private shaming because dominant frameworks about women and their sexuality are ordered through Christian-based patriarchal ideologies. The enactment of this form of sexualized violence by a female officer against Eugenia demonstrates the indoctrination of the sexualized ideology of domination that structures the repressive arm of the state. Therefore, underneath militarized law enforcement runs the same logic of oppression that creates the various mechanisms of control exerted by the central state—whether through regular police, the specialized operational units (akin to SWAT teams) called DINOES, or the army.

Cases of sexualized state violence occurred during a variety of activities, whether before, during, or after states of emergency. The diligencia to the proposed mining site was one type of regular mobilization action that elicited habitual use of repressive force. During encounters with DINOES or the National Police, women who were detained were routinely groped as part of the search-and-arrest procedures. In those instances, as in others, women facing state repression are targeted as women such that control over them is exercised through the vulnerabilities that come with the sexualization of their bodies.

There were also other moments, outside of mobilizations, that presented opportunities for law enforcement to use gendered violence to intimidate anyone affiliated with the struggle. The same summer I interviewed Eugenia, I accompanied the legal team to the hamlet Eugenia is from. There, I met Isabela Flores, the wife of a local leader who has been persecuted and faced numerous charges. In chapter three, I recount other aspects of this same incident, but, here, I
focus on what occurred to Isabela. Isabela’s husband held a leading position in the community, as well as in the anti-Conga movement. His activities had made him the object of a series of violent state interventions with traumatic consequences. As we sat outside her home, under the fading rays of the late afternoon sun, Isabela narrated how a contingent of close to thirty police officers and the local provincial prosecutor had descended on her home one day, in search of her husband. Isabela’s account of the violence she suffered during that assault on her home continues to stand out among my fieldwork experiences.

Isabela stood up to the officials, demanding to know why they had come to her home and asking who had given them orders to do so. By way of response, the officers broke into her house, struck her down, and searched the premises. It is unclear if they were looking for her husband or for evidence of crimes he had been accused of related to the destruction of mine property. Even when officers grabbed her, Isabela continued asking them why they were there. Subsequently, the agents grabbed Isabela by her hair and dragged her from the house onto the road. Isabela did not remember how and when she was taken from the road to the health post because she lost consciousness during the assault. In the aftermath of the raid, these state agents took with them cash that Isabela had stashed in her room, a molino (grinder), and a motorized water pump. While the material losses were substantial for the small-scale farming economy of the household, the psychological and physiological effects of the assault have endured: “Me han arrastrado, señorita. Una lástima. Me han hecho coja.”

Isabela’s experience is emblematic of a broader pattern of sexualized aggression by state forces—be they police or specialized armed units. The violence inflicted on her illustrates the operation of a patriarchal regime which uses women’s bodies to subject, repress, and send a

14 “They dragged me, miss. A beating. They left me with a limp.”
message that is always informally legible and seldom officially visible. These forms of violence are founded on the gendered oppression of the feminine. Historicizing the state’s use of sexual violence in the state-civil conflict from the epoch of the civil war further situates the exercise of sexualized violence in ecoterritorial conflicts. With regard to Peru, Silva Santisteban (2017) invites us to understand continuities between gender violence in the civil war and current ecoterritorial conflicts by reiterating the need to not only connect sexual violence between the two conflicts, but to appreciate the “lógicas patriarcales, racistas y coloniales que se mantienen vivas y que se reproducen en las estructuras de control y de seguridad” (66). Masculinized domination was the organizing logic of the military during the internal armed conflict of the 1980s and 90s—and beyond pacifying and securing the countryside, the military sought control of a territory through sexual violence (Boesten 2014, 24). In an analogous manner, military masculinities are exercised in the control of territory during ecoterritorial conflicts.

**Continuums of Violence**

Various feminist scholars refer to the notion of “continuum of violence” to connect various modalities of violence against women in and beyond internal armed conflicts. The performance and enactment of sexual violence during times of social conflict is not incidental. Instead, it builds on established pre-conflict ideologies of women’s oppression. Indeed, sexual violence is a consequence of societal norms permeated by a patriarchal order which maintains and reproduces the continuum. The concept of “continuum of violence” as a theoretical framework stems from Liz Kelly’s (1988) explanatory model identifying common characteristics of the kinds of violence that encompasses the range of abuse against women. This line of

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15 The patriarchal, racial, and colonial logics that are kept alive and which are reproduced in structures of control and security.
thinking deconstructs normalized ideas about men’s typical behavior to consider the similarities between the ‘typical’ and ‘pathological’ in relation to the control of women. Rape, in particular, is deemed an extreme of the socially-permissible sexual aggressions on the part of men (Kelly 1988, 75). In the sections that follow, I argue that the violence exerted against defensoras is not merely an expression of the extractivist security state, but is an extension – continuum – of broader societal patriarchal norms of machismo, men’s domination over women. I further show this through the conceptualization presented by the director of a feminist NGO working with defensoras, which shows that women’s bodies are continually and uninterruptedly abstracted so as to become a literal terrain on which conflicts are wrought.

A Machista Society Breeds a Machista Police Force

There was a particularly egregious case that serves as example of these societal undercurrents of masculine domination and the subjugation of women that took place in Peru in 2016. This was the case of Arlette Contreras, who was assaulted by her partner, Adriano Pozo, at a hotel in Ayacucho.16 I first heard of Arlette’s case from social media (facebook) and news reports while at university in the U.S. When I returned to Peru in 2017, my research brought me in contact with organizers from the national women’s movement which had experienced a surge in momentum in the wake of Arlette’s case and a series of several other high-profile gender violence cases.17 Pozo’s flagrant aggressions against Arlette, which were caught on video with

16 For a news report (in Spanish) showing the hotel’s video recording, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjICWThqfNE. The news anchor’s commentary should not go unnoticed, specifically, the way it also provides a patriarchalized, and sensational, reading of the events. [Note: The clip shows disturbing images of gender violence.]
17 What I am calling the national women’s movement exists more as a coalition of different movements and organizations that come together as a collective to organize protests and marches. Participants in different cities around the country have organized into proper local branches of these (sub)movements, marching on the same dates as the main mobilizations in Lima. Some of the movements and organizations include: NiUnaMenos Perú, Paro Internacional de Mujeres-Perú, FENMUCARINAP, Flora Tristán, DEMUS, among others.
the hotel’s security camera, generated outrage among swaths of the population that might not have otherwise participated in a feminist movement. And yet, despite the explicit evidence portraying the severity of the assault, Ayacucho’s judiciary eventually absolved Pozo of both the rape and attempted feminicide charges. Pozo’s acquittal makes sense notwithstanding Peru’s adherence to international human rights conventions (e.g., the UN’s CEDAW and the Inter-American “Convention of Belem Do Para”). In this social context, impunity emerges as a key facet and product of a machista society. Thus, impunity serves as a link evidencing the continuities of gender violence in different spaces and situations. Building on her work on Peru’s internal armed conflict, Boesten (2014) contends that impunity remains high regardless of war or peace. This should lead us to consider how approaching acts of sexual violence on a continuum—and through the lens of impunity rather than as isolated categories of action—opens up an epistemological field from which to analyze relations of domination across time and space.

The video permitted Arlette the possibility of appealing to some kind of justice system. Certainly, the visibility created by the video, the case and the ensuing national women’s movement represented a victory for survivors and victims of sexual violence, but it was simultaneously a painstaking process where Arlette’s trauma was renewed for the duration of the case. Still, Arlette’s case was exceptional for even making it to trial. Defensoras usually do not consider themselves as lucky when accessing the legal system. This adds one more reason for remaining silent about the sexual violence inflicted on defensoras by the police. In the next chapter, I delve into the manner in which gender factors into luchadorxs’ legal marginalization. For now, it suffices to say that being a defender and a woman further decreases defensoras’ chances for obtaining redress or justice. Indeed, women in Cajamarca are frequently doubly victimized at police stations when they try to file domestic or sexual violence charges. This
becomes an important factor in many women’s decision to refrain from pursuing a juridical process.

I became aware of the extent of this reality at a regional consultation convened by the government of Cajamarca in February 2017. The consultation, resembling a town hall, was organized in anticipation of the Regional Plan Against Gender Violence 2018-2030. The consultation was meant to provide an opportunity for denizens to speak up and contribute to the creation of this plan, the Region’s localized version of the National Plan Against Gender Violence. When the floor was opened to commentary from the attendees, multiple women recounted experiences of police heckling, minimizing, and flat-out rejecting their claims of sexual violence. During the presentations, panelists had shown Cajamarca’s high statistics of gender and sexual violence, making it one of the top regions in Peru according to these indexes. In response to these assertions, a rural teacher interjected that percentages mean little because the majority of violence taking place in Cajamarca is not reported. The teacher reminded the speakers and government officials that roughly three quarters of Cajamarca is rural, and crimes go unreported in the countryside. Furthermore, she added, women have to be “medio muertas” (half dead) for police to take their claims seriously. Other women in the audience echoed the rural teacher. They reiterated that women are victim-shamed by officers and, on other occasions, officers and other state representatives (e.g., prosecutors) simply will not accept their intent to press charges. When these claims are accepted and registered there is a high risk of them being archived without due process. In other words, women’s interfacing with the police at these junctures creates a space where the patriarchalized order is re-affirmed and women’s trauma is reinforced. A continuum is, therefore, suggestive of the manner in which cultural norms and
beliefs normalize institutional and individual practices of violence, allowing this violence to remain unpunished.

I now turn to Peru’s internal armed conflict—the civil war between the Shining Path and the state—to elicit the continuities that define this continuum. The end of the twentieth century marked the end of the conflict and the transition to peace, albeit under Fujimori’s autocracy. At that time, Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) collected and recorded testimonies which indicated that state agents perpetrated the majority of acts of sexual violence during the conflict. Yet less than a handful of those reported cases have been judicialized (Boesten 2014; Theidon 2011). This is why Theidon (2011) comes to refer to the military personnel who committed these crimes as sinvergüenzas (shameless ones). Theidon remarks: “los sinvergüenzas que se constituyeron como tales en sanguinarios actos de violación grupal no son discutidos en el discurso público peruano” and their crimes remain unpunished (2011, 75). That these actors could continue brazenly living their daily lives demonstrated that they were neither ashamed nor had a reason to feel shame since there was tacit endorsement to use women’s bodies in these ways.

We may extrapolate two interrelated points from the TRC’s revelations that a majority of sex crimes during the war were executed in a systematic fashion by the state’s armed forces. Firstly, institutional (military) sanction of these acts hinged on pre-existing social norms that normalized women’s subjugation. Second, the systematic raping of rural women was a symbolic

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18 Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path in English, was a Maoist armed rebel group that sought to overthrow the state in the 1980s through the 1990s. Peru’s civil war—the internal armed conflict—began when the central state finally countered the Shining Path’s revolutionary attempt to bring socioeconomic equality to the poor and neglected indigenous highland communities of the country. Today, some small blocs of Shining Path fighters remain in remote zones of the Amazon.

19 “The shameless ones who came to be called [constituted] as such through bloody acts of group rape are not spoken of in Peru’s public discourse.”
act that sedimented hierarchies of power (Theidon 2011). Systematic raping is sometimes framed by scholars as a tool in the ‘weapon of war’ thesis (e.g., Franco 2007; Nordstrom 1994; Hague 1997). According to this thesis, rape is instrumentalized by armies both as a show of force and to humiliate the enemy. In these circumstances, under a patriarchal logic, rape communicates an adversary’s inability of protect its women—and by extent the nation (women and their fertility understood as symbolic of the nation). However, this is not the only underlying motivation for using rape in war.

Scholars studying Peru’s conflict agree that one of the purposes of systematic rape was to dominate the enemy; yet, such a framework may be insufficient for understanding how “rape regimes” functioned in the internal conflict (Boesten 2014). For one, the systematic rape of rural women did not always occur during military operations in the countryside. Frequently, as in the anecdotes related to the TRC, women would be taken from their homes and brought to the military bases where they would suffer different forms of sexual violence. In those settings, group and individual rape was not performed for an external (read enemy) audience, instead, as Boesten (2014) argues, it was consumed by a military audience. As a spectacle, it served to desensitize, indoctrinate shamelessness into new recruits, to entertain (because of men’s “natural” sexual compulsions), and became a perverse and criminal way to create group bonding (see also Enloe 1983; 2000). Boesten (2014), following Kelly’s (1988) model, calls the raping perpetrated by state forces during Peru’s internal armed conflict a “rape regime” to underscore that it was a normalized, systematic practice not circumscribed to (individual) pathological behavior.

These mechanisms of domination, though forged in relation to both men and women, are specifically defined through the suppression of the ‘feminine.’ In other words, dominance is
exercised as a function of patriarchal social structures and beliefs where women and men become feminized, weakened subjects to be controlled precisely through sexualized violence. In Peru’s armed forces, we see this in the figure of the guerrero (warrior)—a metonym of the hypermasculine ethos of the military (Theidon 2003; 2011). Boesten proposes that sexual violence is a performed sociopolitical act regardless of peace or conflict, and, indeed, that the complexities of sexual violence in times of war and peace suggest that wartime sexual violence is an amplification of “existing violences and inequalities,” and that the same gender ideology moved through different social contexts (war or peace) (2014, 42).

Tying Together the Thread

The first time I heard of a connection made between the internal armed conflict and the ecoterritorial conflicts was at an encuentro led by DEMUS in October. This was an occasion when María Isabel Cedano, the director of DEMUS, had traveled with the usual DEMUS team to Cajamarca. I had seen and heard María Isabel before at the Foro Social Panamazónico (FOSPA) in Tarapoto in June 2017, but this was the first time I participated in an activity she was so closely involved in. María Isabel spoke at the start of the encuentro as a way to introduce the central themes of the meeting. Because María Isabel did not usually travel to Cajamarca, her talk also served to introduce herself to defensoras who may not have known her. She explained how DEMUS first started its work with women in the Andes. It was a long path toward gaining women’s trust in the communities they visited in Huancavelica. Eventually, DEMUS began working with women to document cases of forced sterilizations during the late 1990s. As María Isabel talked about forced sterilizations, an official government campaign at the time, she linked

20 FOSPA is a regularly-occurring congress (social forum) of civil society groups, organizations, social movements, and peoples who normally have difficulties accessing power in political processes in the Amazonian region of Latin America.
this kind of gender violence against rural Andean women to the gendered violence of the internal armed conflict. In other words, that the government persistently inflicts violence on rural Andean women in its strategies of repression and oppression. And then María Isabel traced a spatio-temporal line between the civil war and the ecoterritorial conflicts defensoras are participating in today. For María Isabel, the geospatial overlap was a clear indication that the continuity of violence was not fortuitous. At the meeting, María Isabel went no further in detailing her assertion. Her statements seemed to find a receptive audience in the circle of women listening to her; nobody interjected or commented on it. My collaborators also did not bring it up with me afterward as they sometimes did with parts of encuentros they found challenging.

The thesis about the strategic use of war for land dispossession is not limited to Peru, as similar propositions have been made in reference to Guatemala and Colombia (e.g., Cutipa-Zorn 2019; Gómez, Sánchez-Ayala, and Vargas 2015; C. A. Smith 1990). The idea is that internal armed conflicts are portrayed as a confrontation between the state and armed insurgents, where the latter seek to bring disorder and chaos to civilization. In the process, a field of opposition is generated where rebels or, in this case, ecoterritorial defenders are labeled terrorists. Meanwhile, there is little accountability for state-induced harm and destruction. This type of war surreptitiously empty territories by producing masses of displaced communities, usually indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, and other small-holding and subsistence farmers.

War serves many purposes and is seldom waged solely on grounds of virtue. Taken together with María Isabel’s proposition on the continuities of violence in the Andean region, these arguments allow for a better contextualization of ecoterritorial conflicts in Peru. So, rather than critiquing the foundations of the land dispossession and continuities theses, I extrapolate from them a series of significant points. First, these propositions highlight how the chaos of war
enables the confusion that permits power-wielding groups to advantageously occupy spaces (territories). Second, gendered violence is a tool of militarized repression. One way or another women bear the brunt of conflicts, and indigenous women’s bodies, in particular, are abstracted and subverted by the state as sites of conflict and violation in the exercise of domination by state forces. Therefore, whether or not there were political and economic interests desirous of prolonging the internal armed conflict in Peru’s southern highlands and other parts of the countryside, the geospatial overlap of the conflict zones is unmistakable. That the Andean region is primarily populated by indigenous and low-income mestizo peoples (i.e., non-elites) allows wars to be waged and (geospatial and corporeal) territorial dispossession to transpire with impunity. I contend that this is one of the key links in the continuity of violence in the Peruvian Andes: gente del campo (people from the countryside) are deemed expendable populations because they are indigenous, poor, and feminized. This, here, is another thread of the Quijano’s (2000) “coloniality of power.” Whether conflicts begin out of revolutionary ideals or from top-down state projects in the name of development, rural communities are sidelined by more powerful (state) actors who act as if they need not account for the violence they inflict.

María Isabel was mapping out the contours of systemic violence by drawing out spatial and temporal connections between different sets of events that rested on gendered violence. Gender remains a significant undercurrent of the vectors of social difference (e.g., economic, political, racial) that propel social conflicts (Cockburn 2004). This makes gender central to this mapping as state armed forces are part of the same patriarchal structure that shapes social life. DEMUS concurrently maintains campaigns toward achieving legal justice for women who were sexually and reproductively victimized during the internal armed conflict and Fujimori’s presidency, and supporting defensoras’ participation in ecoterritorial struggles. By jointly
working on these of struggles and linking them through these continuities, DEMUS re-centers the gendered continuum of violence in conversations about the civil war and ecoterritorial conflicts. Hence, the state’s proclivity to turn the police force into a pseudo-army through militarization, alongside military deployment to quell anti-extractivism protests, evinces how the strong arm of the extractive security state is set up to uphold masculine subcultures founded on the oppression of women and feminized subjects. And so, continuities in violence (the violence exerted over a geospatial area) and in the quality of violence (sexualized and gendered) persist.

**Securitizing Extractivism: The Legal Contours of a State of Exception**

Declarations of emergency serve as licit, if illegitimate, states of exception that at face value reaffirm the biopolitical ethos of the nation-state, but are enacted in the service of capital. The discussion that follows builds on the heteropatriarchal logics of power that figuratively – and literally – secure the violence brought to bear on the multiple territories, entities, and subjects at the extractive frontier. Security is a compulsory condition frequently founded on the forceful masculinized domination of the territories within the geopolitical borders of the nation-state. Here, I describe the legal maneuvers, which often entail legislation favoring conditions of exception, through which the central government in Peru seeks to control protest. Nevertheless, luchadorxs contest the state’s legitimacy through strikes and in their own narratives of conflict. In the end, we see how impunity destabilizes the discourses of security offered by the state to reveal the contradictions of extractive governance.

As ecoterritorial conflicts become increasingly pervasive, there has been a proportional rise in the number of murders and threats affecting ecoterritorial activists. In 2015, there were
185 documented killings of defenders across sixteen countries ("On Dangerous Ground" 2016).21 In 2016, this number rose to at least two hundred ("Defenders of the Earth: Global Killings of Land and Environmental Defenders in 2016" 2017).22 In both 2015 and 2016, indigenous defenders made up 40 percent of victims. In 2017, there were 197 recorded assassinations. The location of these killings, disappearances, and kidnappings reveals that the majority occurred in geographically isolated or remote rural locations ("On Dangerous Ground" 2016). Furthermore, these crimes go largely unpunished and there is usually little incentive to investigate and prosecute them despite the Human Rights accords that require signatories to provide legislated measures protecting against rights’ violations. Latin America, leading in the past several years with the greatest number of defender killings, is plagued with ecoterritorial conflicts originating in right and left-leaning nation-states alike. To date, OCLA (Observatorio Conflictos Mineros América Latina) has documented 246 mining conflicts in Latin America, six of which are transnational projects.

Even though the persecution and assassination of ecoterritorial activists and defenders is done by myriad actors, extractivist governments allow these killings to continue by doing little to protect defenders. The impunity with which these crimes are met is a reflection of state complicity with the criminals who commit them. The assassination of defense leaders is one way to intimidate defenders and weaken struggles, which serves the economic goals of these states. It is at this juncture where an important contradiction of the extractive security state surfaces. In the context of liberal nation-states, the government’s complicity in these crimes belies biopolitical, 21 Global Witness records data of documented deaths around the world. The NGO remarks that the number of killings is likely higher; however, cases go unreported or remain inaccessible from public or online sources of research. 22 Both years, mining led the statistics on industry-related killings. Brazil had the highest assassination rate both years, yet, per capita, Honduras remained the most dangerous place for defenders in the last decade. Colombia surpassed the Philippines in 2016, moving from third to second place in a single year. Of note in the report was the assessment that the span of reported killings expanded to twenty-four countries in 2016.
humanitarian discourses based on the preservation of life and the protection of civil rights. Yet extractive security states appeal to these very same discourses to licitly smother opposition to large-scale extractive projects.

In Peru, securitizing the boundaries of the nation-state and its interests is partially achieved through the militarization of the police, by curtailing civil rights, and through the employment of violent coercive mechanisms. Extractive governance echoes the “new grammar of power” of human-security states, which are states that create a political framework of humanitarian securitization which produces a population of victims and suspects (Boesten 2014, 24). These are, thus, biopolitical regimes of domination of the twenty-first century where the goal is the securitization of a population through militarized modalities of power emerging at the intersection of global humanitarian discourses and militarization. In this new state order, humanity is reconceptualized to the extent that the targets of human security governance are “human security products” instead of human rights’ claimants (Amar 2013, 15). In contrast to “human-security states,” the extractive security state does not come out of the unlikely formation of alliances between civil and state institutions of rightist religious militancy, labor unions, and militarized humanitarianism. The extractive security state emerges from the conjunction between regimes of global humanitarianism and the coloniality of development. In both cases, hypermasculinities based on patriarchal systems of oppression inform these modes of “securitized domination” (20).

The states of emergency declared in Cajamarca during the anti-Conga protests at the end of 2011 and in 2012 were pivotal moments in the conflict. In 2011, the president of the Environmental Defense Front of Cajamarca (Frente de Defensa Ambiental de Cajamarca), Wilfredo Saavedra, called for a regional paro (strike) on November 24, which eventually forced
President Humala’s new government to buckle and establish negotiations with the anti-Conga movement. After these negotiations failed, President Humala declared a sixty-day state of emergency in four provinces (Cajamarca, Celendín, Hualgayoc, and Contumazá) effective December 5, 2011. Among the explanations for declaring an emergency, President Humala maintained that the lack of an agreement with movement leadership prevented the return of social peace and public services, which Cajamarcans were entitled to. The President also referred to resistance efforts as an impediment to moving forward with plans to bring further development into the region. A regional strike was convened again in June of 2012. On this occasion, the central government had a more direct militarized response, deploying violent repression and leaving four dead activists and dozens of Cajamarcans injured. In the aftermath of the state’s killings, President Humala declared a state of emergency for thirty days, which was subsequently extended another thirty. Much like in the previous declaration, Humala’s justification for this emergency lay in safeguarding well-being of the people, public and private property, and transportation ways.

The ease with which President Humala imposed states of emergency was the outcome of a series of legislative modifications that accumulated over decades. Some of the most notable laws date back to the early 2000s, following the fall of Fujimori’s regime. Law 27686 from 2002 holds citizens under the obligation to request “guarantees” from state agencies before undertaking any marches or mobilizations. In 2007, through Law 29166, the military was given

25 “Guarantees” toe the line between a straightforward notification of intent and a submission for permission and approval to mobilize. The latter request practically annuls the right to freely assemble, allowing the state the final determination on a case-by-case basis.
permission to use firearms within national territory. This law was later replaced by the President’s Legislative Decree 1095, established in September 2010, which regulated the military’s use of force within the bounds of the nation-state. Among other provisions, Decree 1095 defines concepts such as hostile groups, internal order, conditions for using lethal and nonlethal force, and supportive functions vis-à-vis the national police. The decree also specifies that the armed forces are subject to International Human Rights norms. Recently, the controversial Law 30151, enacted in January 2014, exonerates the national police and armed forces from criminal prosecution if they injure or kill a person in the performance of their duties or in self-defense. Human Rights and legal NGOs in Peru expressed concern over vulnerabilities to human rights protection and the risk of impunity the law generated. Law 30151 was strategically enacted in the aftermath of one of the most violent episodes of state repression during an ecoterritorial conflict: the Baguazo of 2009.\(^\text{26}\)

This body of legislation encroaches on the liberal rights of Peruvian citizens to free expression and assembly while gradually militarizing state mechanisms for suppressing opposition to extractive development. Though states of emergency were also enacted during Peru’s internal conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, there is significant divergence in its implementation under Peru’s democratic governments in the twenty-first century. The central state’s first national response to the Shining Path, a declared state of emergency in several Andean departments, took place two years after the guerrillas’ initial action (Boesten 2014). Measured by scale and time, the reach of those declarations during the internal conflict was

\(^{26}\) The indigenous uprising called *el Baguazo* took place on June 5, 2009 on a stretch of road called Curva del Diablo (Devil’s Curb) outside the city of Bagua. Indigenous and mestizo protestors participated in a road blockade that lasted nearly two months. This strike was a demonstration against newly-enacted laws which facilitate foreign investment and natural resource extraction in the Amazonian provinces of the region. Close to six hundred police officers, backed with tanks, helicopters, and tear gas were sent to the zone in the early morning of the fifth to put an end to the protest (Greene 2009, 52). The events and violence that transpired that morning remain opaque, but the clash resulted in the deaths of twenty-three police officers and ten civilians.
extensive—sometimes submitting close to half the population to a state of emergency that lasted years. Comparing these two modes of exceptions, and drawing on the expanded militarization of civic life, Silva Santisteban (2017) emphasizes that while states of emergency in the 1980s could last up to two years, today’s emergencies are episodic, but nonetheless enacted with frequency.

Counter-Narratives to the Extractive Security State

In conversations with a wide range of locals, from unaffiliated Cajamarcaños to defensorxs and movement leaders, I heard several iterations of the same account regarding the strikes. The strikes had vast support despite the challenges for navigating routine activities, such as buying groceries and going to school. Businesses, public institutions, and markets were officially shutdown, but, as per agreements with movement leaders, markets would open for a few hours in the early morning allowing people to procure foodstuffs. Later in the day, market vendors, a large percentage of whom are women, would join protests and marches. This was the case both in the capital and in provincial cities like Celendín. Students no longer attending classes also joined the mobilizations. Seen in this light, the strikes were highly coordinated efforts that required the consent and support of a public that was deeply invested in halting the Conga Mine. In Cajamarca, residents donated food, supplies, and clothing for the main core of protestors, especially those that had traveled from other provinces to participate. The success of the strikes depended on strong solidarity efforts. The objectives of the strike were both a show of (figurative) force and the application of economic pressure to compel the central state to meet with movement leaders. Rather than disorderly affairs, demonstrations and actions during the strikes required a high degree of planning.
The aim of mobilizations and protests was never to threaten the public (indeed, protestors did not attack civilians nor private or public entities); yet, defenders have regularly been labeled “terrorists.” The strategic use of the “terrorist” label by mainstream media and state actors once again links ecoterritorial conflicts with the internal armed conflict. The Shining Path was considered a terrorist entity by the government. One reason why Peru’s leftist parties weakened after the 1980s, and why there was not significant social movement organization in the 1990s and early 2000s, was that the public was afraid to oppose the government and be lumped with the guerrilla. Like the criminal cases brought against defensorxs, the label “terrorist” brings with it social stigma. The label also has the power to taint the reputations of defenders.

When violent episodes did arise during the strikes, the state’s law enforcement arm was a central figure. Violence primarily erupted when the police and militarized forces, in particular the specialized DINOES units, attempted to forcefully disperse and repress the mobilizations. Tear gas, rubber and real bullets, arrests, harassment, and physical assaults were all part of the repertoire of tools deployed by the state’s armed forces. The use of tear gas caused panic among civilians and defenders alike. As state forces advanced through Cajamarca, protestors scattered throughout the city, running away from the various points where the armed forces began their attacks. Activists stopped at random houses, knocking on doors to seek refuge. Even Cajamarcans who had not actively participated in the manifestations opened their doors to protestors. As the police took over the streets, officers captured and arrested protestors still found outdoors.

Evidently, emergencies were declared to bring “peace” to places where peaceful demonstrations had been going on. The central state had thought it prudent to drop armed forces to subdue a population exercising its right to mobilize. Referring to the presidential decrees and
Emergency designations which afforded the President the ability to suspend civil rights and impose military rule, Raúl Zibechi remarks that both kinds of measures “implican la ampliación de los poderes del Ejecutivo, borrándose las fronteras entre la emergencia militar y la emergencia económica” (2014, 83). The economic urgency for the President was clear—social protests had paused the continuation of Conga, which represented a significant percentage of Peru’s mining investment portfolio for the next decade. But in what ways had the anti-Conga strikes in Cajamarca represented a military emergency? The ambiguity of “internal order” in the laws was sufficient to justify the state of emergency.

Extractive governance is predicated on a government structure that begins enmeshing legislative, executive, and law enforcement powers to further extractivism. This establishes a regime of power harnessed for the sake of development to the potential detriment of the rights of its population. This resulting ease of using militarized force and suspending civil rights affords the central state powers to act with impunity. In post-conflict Peru, constitutional protections and the separation between the military and civic life is being chipped away slowly. During his presidency, Humala activated a stipulation of Decree 1095 allowing the military to “support” the National Police nineteen times (Silva Santisteban 2017, 116). In effect, this was the militarized occupation of spaces without the need for declared states of emergency. The dual process of assembling a militarized social order and dismantling civil rights points to a strategy of control over national territory that subordinates managing the quality of life of the citizenry.

27“Imply the expansion of Executive powers, erasing the boundaries between a military emergency and an economic emergency.”
Conclusions

A chapter centered on militarized conflicts inevitably means writing about violence. In this chapter, I have argued that the extractive security state operates through interlocking modalities of violence to quell opposition to extraction-based economic growth. I showed how, as the Peruvian state clamps down with more force at mobilizations intent on challenging extractivism, it also applies a soft power repressive approach by liberalizing the police force and entering into public-private security contracts. These agreements are representative of new everyday practices of control which free the government of its responsibilities to the public. I foregrounded the coloniality of state violence by attending to its racial and classed dimensions. I also honed in on how the political persecution of defensoras is gendered, making women in the struggle targets of sexualized violence. Indeed, the state materializes and makes itself understood through violent disciplining and racial, classed, and gendered colonial ideologies provide the syntax for how extractivism is inscribed on the cuerpo territorial.

The patriarchal ideologies informing state repression are clear. This has connections to a longer history of state violence in relation to rural, mestiza, and indigenous women. And it has deeper roots in the gendered and sexualized violence deployed as a tool of domination and edification (for the military) in the counterinsurgency war of the 1980s and 90s. Examined through the prism of the “continuum,” we appreciate the continuities in the violence situated in the Andean countryside, a spatial continuity intersected by the temporal continuity of sexualized violence. Ultimately, the state seeks to exert its domination on the cuerpo territorial in the extractive frontier through the familiar channels of machismo.
In the context of ecoterritorial conflicts, state-civilian interactions are conjugated through a grammar of violence. Often, this has meant that state repression, including lethal violence, is deployed against unarmed protestors. The militarization of conflict, with its corollary militarization of the police, is a security technique that characterizes a new state order. Thus, the security paradigm shaping the state’s exercises of control naturalizes states of exception to maintain a regime of extractive governance that legalizes violence and assures impunity.
In Peru, the maintenance of an extractive economy involves the state use of physical violence and threat of violent or legal coercion through the court system. The criminalization of anti-extractivism protesting functions as a mechanism for judicializing ecoterritorial politics (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). Judicialization creates what I refer to as “legal marginalization,” which implies two things: the law serving as a means of locating luchadorxs at legal margins and as a system that exacerbates socio-economic marginalization. The adjudication of resistance to extractive projects rests on deepening inequalities of power between that state and its non-elite subjects and in access to rights, such as freedom of speech and assembly. In this chapter, I explore how legal marginalization is generated by creating juridical targets out of defensorxs. The state use of the legal system to force opponents of large-scale mining into a situation of legal marginalization is an integral dimension of the larger extractivist development model. Furthermore, and crucially, the effects of criminalization in this model are differentially experienced by women and men.

Peru’s extractivist economy maps onto a broader tendency in the Global South toward the “judicialization of politics,” an increasingly common feature of social justice struggles (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). In this arrangement, political differences migrate toward the legal realm instead of being resolved through other processes—such as contestation through the
ballot (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012, 144). In other words, rather than allowing economic policy to be decided through the electoral process, opposition—that is so say, a different political position—is outright made illegal. Consequently, the state criminalizes the protest of development projects. Comaroff and Comaroff point out that part of the cultural habitus of neoliberalism, specifically, “rests heavily on the argot of rights, injuries, contracts, and courts” (2012, 145). Thus, the judicialization of ecoterritorial activism is carried out through formal state mechanisms that represent legitimate liberal channels. Indeed, the emergence of the tendency to judicialize politics has coincided with the expansion of neoliberal politico-economic doctrines, as has been the case in Peru since the 1990s under Fujimori’s regime (see Hale 2011 for Latin America). This may be attributed to the notion that the liberal part of neoliberal economics still adheres to the rule of law insofar as it preserves the “freedom” to possess private property alongside other individual rights and freedoms. Seen in light of how these global and local forces transect each other, we may understand the ensuing criminalization and legal marginalization of defenders in Peru as the absorption of ecoterritorial politics by the Law.

Distinct legal regimes (international, national, ronda) function simultaneously to create a complex legal terrain in Peru, however. By extent, the paradoxes that are produced are multiple and overlapping, often the result of distinct interactions between actors in and with different scales and legal structures. The situations I explore in the following sections reveal some of this complexity. I begin the following discussion by looking into the paradoxes of the “Rule of Law” through a structural analysis of the legal regime that figures into the socio-political field of extractivism in Peru. The structural workings of Peru’s “extractivist” juridical apparatus are deployed on macro- and micro-scales that sometimes meet at illustrative conjunctures in the lives of defensorxs. The transfer of jurisdiction for Conga-related cases (as per Administrative
Resolution 096-2012-CE-PJ) and the systematic archiving of charges pressed by defensorxs represent two instances of how the exigencies of a flexibilized Rule of Law affect luchadorxs.

This chapter looks first at legal marginalization as a process consisting of four components: economic, transfer of jurisdiction, fetishization of the law, and systematic archiving. The economics of judicialization focuses on the economic hardships faced by most rural luchadorxs who must appear in the excessive number of hearings they face. We begin to see in this part, as well as in the second part of the chapter, how the nature of this hardship varies as it falls on women, especially according to their domestic and communal responsibilities. The transfer of jurisdictions refers to the central state’s legal maneuvering via legislation, such as Administrative Resolution 096-2012-CE-PJ, that reflects how the Executive and the juridical apparatus work together to legally marginalize activists. These legal measures, meant to overwhelm and marginalize luchadorxs, derive from the fetishization of liberal rights; a process that generally characterizes the judicialization of politics. The fourth component, systematic archiving, is constituted by complementary tactics (systematic and preemptive archiving) that in practice deny defensorxs their constitutionally-recognized rights as citizens.

In the second part, I examine judicialization in situ, in the formal space of the court of law. Here, we leave the abstracted discursive spaces of the law to witness how the criminalization of ecoterritorial defense is judicialized on the ground. I zoom into the courtroom where judicialization is materialized to re-focus our attention to the paradoxical legal spaces that are enacted and produced in the microcosm of the courtroom. On two occasions, I was able to attend hearings for a criminal case against luchadorxs who had mobilized in a district of Celendín to voice their opposition to Chadín II, a large hydrodam project located on the Marañón River, long considered the principal source of the Amazon River. An accounting of the
courtroom as a legal space of the juridical apparatus sets the stage for the textured weaving of relations constituting gendered legal marginalization of defensorxs. The courtroom in Celendín presents us with the materialization of a liberal legal regime that purports to see its population as equal citizens before the Law. However, these attempts at creating a clinical space where citizenship confers equivalence actually works to uphold the structures of violence produced by beliefs in the impartiality of the Law. These interactions between civil and state actors within the juridical apparatus ultimately point us to questions about justice.

Part I: Legal marginalization

Legal marginalization is multi-faceted, consisting of various modalities of marginalization that work through interlocking categories of difference including class, race, and gender. For example, the placement of juridical proceedings in other regions of the country imposes on rural defendants unduly financial burdens that limit their ease of access to the (court of) law and fair trials. Financial burdens compound the caretaking obligations which constrain women’s ability to continuously travel back and forth between hearings. Thus, given that the focus of this research is on the lives of defensoras, I hone in on gender as a vector for highlighting the ways the juridical apparatus is incorporated as one cog in the larger structures of state violence. Legal marginalization is the effect of this kind of structural violence. Needless to say, parallel analyses using class or race as primary lenses offer additional nuance to how marginalization is enacted. Still, class, race, and gender are interwoven dimensions of criminalization in the cases I refer to. This is because these vectors of difference are never desegregated in actual life, and they thus inform defensoras’ embodied experiences of resistance.
Building on the idea of the “judicialization of politics,” I examine the legal marginalization experienced by defensorxs immersed in liberal rights regimes. Defenders’ experiences with the legal system suggests that what undergirds judicialized ecoterritorial politics is the politicization of the “Rule of Law.” The judicialization of mining politics in Cajamarca paradoxically produces spaces of legal marginalization for Cajamarca’s ecoterritorial defenders. In unravelling how the legal marginalization of ecoterritorial defenders in Peru takes place, we see how the central state and defensorxs, as two sets of actors on opposite sides of a mining conflict, co-produce paradoxical spaces of the law through their engagement with(in) a common legal system. I maintain that this is a useful lens for understanding the legal dynamics implicated in the marginalization of defenders. At certain moments, claims of guarantee to the rights of the citizenry serve to provide legitimacy to a government interested in promoting extractive industries. These are moments when the central state makes a biopolitical gesture with a veneer of benevolence. As the state projects itself as protector of the rights of the population, it inhibits the rights of sectors of its citizenry. In this extractive context, human and indigenous rights claims co-mingle as defenders engage with liberally-based legal systems comprised of national and international juridical regimes.

**Economics of Judicialization**

The first form of legal marginalization derives from the economics of judicialization. Participation in the processes of the juridical apparatus requires monetary resources which come into play as a factor in fair access to the legal system. A lack or limitation in these resources intensifies the marginal socio-economic positions defensorxs commonly occupy. So, the economics of judicialization does, in fact, contribute to marginalizing defensorxs. As defendants, luchadorxs are seldom able to afford the best legal representation and their classed position limits
their sociopolitical influence in the system. To further intensify this pressure, Peru’s Judiciary Executive Council (*Consejo Ejecutivo del Poder Judicial*) released Administrative Resolution 096-2012-CE-PJ on May 31, 2012 which resolved that cases related to social upheaval in the regions of Cajamarca and Cusco would be remitted to the courts in the neighboring region of Lambayeque and Ica respectively (San Martín Castro 2012). Martín Díaz, a well-known community leader and prominent activist in the Conga conflict, endures these hardships when he is required to present himself in court. He remarked the following regarding his trials, which had been transferred to courts in Chiclayo:

NGS: ¿Y usted tiene procesos [legales] a su contra? ¿Cuántos procesos tiene?

MD: Mira, yo he llegado a cerca de 40 procesos…

…

NGS: ¿Y cómo le ha afectado tener todos estos procesos contra su persona?

MD: En primer lugar lo que nos afecta es economicamente porque tenemos que trasladarnos a todos los lados… porque tenemos que trasladarnos adonde nos citan y que a veces también…hemos tenido a veces [que] buscar un abogado y, pero de todas maneras tenemos algo [que] contribuir, o hacer un contrato con un abogado para que lleve nuestros casos…y lo otro es que también es como una perdida de tiempo para tener que asumir también las responsabilidades de nuestra familia, no? ¿Entonces todo eso lleva también a perjudicar, no?

1 In order to grasp the significance of this shift, it is imperative to understand that regions in Peru resulted from decentralization efforts in the late 1990s which in effect gave local (regional) governments more power to manage their geopolitical areas. Regions may be seen as paralleling states in the federal system of the United States. Therefore, to change jurisdiction from one region to another for the processing of cases is akin to transferring cases to another state.

2 NGS: And you have [legal] processes against you? How many processes do you have?

MD: I have reached close to 40 processes…
Martín’s situation shows the direct and indirect financial costs of being subjected to dozens of charges that are legally processed in another region of the country. In this manner, the legal system is refashioned to inflict more bureaucratic structural violence upon some of the most economically-deprived populations in Peru (see Gupta 2012). Martín has managed to support his family despite the monetary costs of these legal procedures, yet his economic resources are rather exceptional when compared to those of most movement participants. Nevertheless, Martín’s legal situation is but one example from the dozens of legal processes against other leaders and activists in more precarious financial positions. These defensorxs would appear to be the recipients of an excess of the “processual guarantees of citizens” in Peru. In other words, the propagation of trials is a pretension to extend full processual guarantees to individuals while using these as a weapon to create obstacles for accessing those very rights.

Transfer of Jurisdiction & Legal Retaliation

In Peru, the celebrated Tambogrande community referendum of 2002, which voted against Manhattan Minerals’ mining project, was met with governmental legal retaliation that charged 56 activists with crimes related to a 2001 protest (McGee 2009, 608). Mining struggles in other Peruvian regions, such as in Piura and Cusco (Vásquez, n.d.), face similar state tactics of legal intimidation (see Isla 2002 for Costa Rica; Rondon 2009 for Peru and Ecuador).

Administrative Resolution 096-2012-CE-PJ, which legitimized the transfer of jurisdictions for

NGS: And how have you been affected by having all these processes against your person?
MD: In the first place it affects us economically because we have to move from place to place…because we have to go where we have been called [to court] and also that sometimes…we have had to find a lawyer to take our cases…and the other thing is that it is also like a waste of time because we also have to assume our familial responsibilities, no? So all of that is also detrimental, no?

3 A 2014 report about the risks for environmental defenders (defensores del medio ambiente), published by the international NGO Front Line Defenders, noted that about 400 environmental activists in Peru faced judicial proceedings (“Defensores y Defensoras Del Medio Ambiente En Riesgo En Perú” 2014). While some of the cases and legal processes against these activists are eventually dismissed, the report mentions that the transfer of jurisdiction affects activists’ access to justice.
social conflict cases, was passed against the backdrop of mounting social unrest in different parts of Peru. In Cajamarca, this unrest culminated in a second period (June-July 2012) of vast mobilizations following the November-December 2011 general strike. Between November 2011 and September 2012 there were 303 persons with criminal charges in Cajamarca in relation to the Conga conflict (Vásquez n.d.). Among those charged were local authorities such as the region’s president, the mayors of several Cajamarcan cities, as well as Defense Front leaders. In light of this fraught socio-political climate, drawing on the notion of the “judicialization of politics” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012) as it pertains to liberal governmental regimes and human and indigenous rights discourse allows us to appreciate how Peru’s legal system comes to bear down on luchadorxs and their families.

In the context of the Conga conflict, the Judiciary Executive Council justified the resolution as follows:

Aún cuando en la Región Cajamarca todavía no se ha puesto en vigencia un régimen de excepción, no es menos cierto que en dicha zona se vienen produciendo movilizaciones, atentados a la libre circulación de tránsito y de personas…cuyas repercusiones podrían afectar seriamente el desarrollo de las labores jurisdiccionales y…el ejercicio de los de los derechos y garantías procesales de los ciudadanos… (2012, 1)

Indeed, when the resolution was passed at the end of May, there was no state of emergency and Cajamarca’s court system had been functioning properly. The central state only declared a state of emergency in three Cajamarcan provinces a month later (July 2012). While Peru’s

4 “Even though a system of exception [state of emergency] has not been put into force in the Region of Cajamarca, it is no less the case that in said zone there are mobilizations, attempts against the free circulation of people and traffic…whose repercussions may seriously affect the development of jurisdictional work and…the exercise of rights and processual guarantees of citizens...”
Constitution guarantees citizens the right to trial in their local (regional) court system, this resolution in effect circumvented that right as a way to allegedly “protect” broader collective rights, such as the processual guarantees of citizens.

In a response written by lawyer César Bazán Seminario, of the Legal Defense Institute (IDL) in Peru, this resolution stems from an article in the penal code which allows the Judiciary to establish a specific alternate system of territorial juridical organization in order to process especially grave offenses or matters of national importance. In his analysis, Bazán Seminario notes that the fundamentals of the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive branches of the state are challenged by the resolution. Bazán Seminario argues that the Judiciary’s resolution reflects the successful expression of the Executive’s will through the juridical apparatus (2012). When the resolution was released, a note was posted on the website of the Judiciary which referenced a work meeting between the President of the Judiciary, the National Prosecutor, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Justice in order to “coordinar acciones en defensa del orden y la legalidad en el país” (coordinate action plans in defense of order and legality in the nation) (“Dictan Medidas Para Una Acción Eficaz En Zonas Convulsionadas” 2012).

For Bazán Seminario the measures stated in the resolution do not pass what he calls the “test of razonabilidad” (2012; test of reasonable soundness). While the resolution intends to protect rights to due process, the measures it imposes are disproportionate to the circumstances at hand. NGOs working closely on the Conga conflict echoed this position, maintaining that sending Conga-related cases to Lambayeque created barriers for farmers and local leaders to access their rights to due process and justice (Vásquez, n.d.; Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos 2014).
Fetishization of the Law

The increasing judicialization of politics, however, relies on the fetishization of the law, which stems from the liberal genealogy of modern nation-states (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012, 78). Fetishism of the law refers to the persistent recourse to the law as ultimate, neutral arbiter to mediate between contests stemming from a politics of difference. Though a large part of Comaroff and Comaroff’s (2012) discussion has to do with cultural rights, the notion of legal fetishism is useful for understanding why politics comes to be scaffolded by the juridical apparatus. In fetishizing the “Rule of Law,” people, governments, and organizations are drawing on idealizations of the law’s ability to create equivalence in situations of difference. The “Rule of Law” thus comes to be perceived as an adequate mechanism for upholding liberal rights, attaining justice, and legitimizing state regimes (2012, 145).

This fetishization became particularly clear when I worked with the legal institute in Lima. I observed how the institute received time and time again statements from the national Public Prosecutor’s Office that referred to legal procedures which defensorxs had purportedly not made use of. By falling back on legal proceduralism, the government in essence defended the Executive from accusations of repression and political persecution. For example, one such legal procedure was the constitutionally-recognized requirement that state-related violations be denounced before the Public Ministry. Yet defensorxs’ attempts to exercise this right are repeatedly rejected or claims are inexplicably dismissed and closed. Thus, within the blurred boundaries between the Judiciary and the Executive branches, the resolution governing jurisdictional transfers was enacted in the name of guaranteeing the rights of civil society—with the exception of anyone opposing the advancement of extractive industries. The existence of
legal rights on paper does not presuppose the attainment of justice; however, it does serve to legitimize the central state in legal battles at the international court level.

In the end, marginalization continues through an espousal of civil rights which on the ground does not amount to justice for marginalized communities of defenders. Just as citizens are guaranteed rights to due process under Peru’s Constitution, they likewise have the right to press charges for crimes committed against them. Underlying these stated rights, however, exists a gap between the initial attempt by citizens to press charges and the actual start of a legal procedure, which ultimately obstructs efforts to pursue adjudication in the context of extractive development.

**Systematic Archiving**

Systematic archiving is what I call the specific practice of legal marginalization by rejection, stall, or closure of cases brought forth by defensorxs. This tactic is hard to track and denounce, and it causes significant difficulties for locals who have opposed the Conga mine. Systematic archiving entails continual, and often unexplained, dismissal of defensorxs’ cases against state agents or mine employees. This practice also operates through what I term “preemptive archiving,” in which defenders’ claims are impeded from ever entering the legal system. As a way to introduce the section, I open up with a scene from the assembly of ronderxs we attended during my first trip to Cajamarca.

Communities from all over the region sent ronda representatives to participate at a special convocation of an assembly of ronderxs (*asamblea rondera*) held in the city of Cajamarca in the mid-June of 2014. Gathered together in a teacher’s union building, close to 50 ronderxs sat in rows facing a long table where community leaders and lawyers from different organizations were
seated. The convocation was organized in order to update ronderxs on the case being presented before the IACHR and on domestic legal proceedings associated with Conga. The main topic of the meeting had been the IACHR’s latest ruling which granted precautionary measures on behalf of 46 Cajamarcan beneficiaries. One leader candidly admitted that he had been skeptical at first about pursuing legal avenues. In his emphatic address, the leader stated that ronderxs should also look to legal strategies against the mining company. He exclaimed that just as Yanacocha denounced them, they also needed to denounce and press charges against the corporation.

Most of the defenders I met during both trips to Cajamarca that summer had experienced some form of violence at the hands of police officers or Yanacocha employees. Informal conversations with ronderxs as well as their testimonies during the assembly revealed moments when they had received threats or injuries because of their activism. Of the twelve interviews I conducted, at least eight interlocutors narrated personal experiences of police violence associated with their participation in the movement. During interviews we asked our interlocutors if they ever tried to file charges against the officers (or other state agents) who had taken part in attacks against them. They explained that they had, but these cases would often end up archived. As a result, some of these activists stopped trying to recur to the law as a way to validate their rights. Others never attempted to bring forth charges because they were skeptical of the ability of the law to protect them and provide justice.

One of the senior lawyers from our team, Zulma Villa, followed her explanation of the IACHR precautionary measures by a discussion about the central state’s responses to the

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5 I concretely conducted twelve interviews, but would consider unstructured conversations with two other activists as equally insightful. Outside the context of the interviews, I spoke with close to fifteen other activists in casual conversation. Needless to say, my attendance at the ronda assembly allowed me to learn about the cases of activists I did not directly speak to or meet.
measures. Zulma boiled down the central state’s main strategy: to proceed with actions that delay the legal process (actos de dilatación). The systematic archiving of activists’ claims may also be interpreted as a tactic for delaying access to rights and justice. A lawyer from Grufides presented a summary of cases going through Peru’s internal judicial system which are being handled in conjunction by Grufides’s legal team and the Institute. Most of the cases, which go back to 2012, had been closed and consequently archived by judges.

Preemptive Archiving

Systematic archiving also occurs through “preemptive archiving” at the interface of the state and citizens during the transactional interactions that mark low-level state bureaucracy. Throughout my years of research in Peru, I routinely heard accounts of the state’s foreclosure of claims before they were turned into cases. I subsume this practice within systematic archiving not because a claim is literally being archived, but because the effects are the same. The possibility to denounce is shut before the paperwork for a case (that would most likely later be archived) is materially created. Interpersonal transactions at the local scale, whether at a police station or at the prosecutor’s office, are actively shaped by state representatives to create a quality of transience that protects extractivist interests. The refusal to accept a community member’s claim for pressing charges is, thus, as important example of this tactic. Wholly disregarding legal rights, state agents with the duty to accept such claims reject citizens’ attempts to access the law. Acting as gatekeepers, these agents systematically shut down this legal avenue.

6 Significantly, in reference to the jurisdictional transfer of Conga cases, Grufides’s lawyer also noted that among other practical problems created by the transfer of jurisdiction from Cajamarca to Lambayeque, defendants now had to figure out the means to travel to the neighboring region. This jurisdictional transfer was producing a double victimization for community members facing criminal charges by national and municipal prosecutors. 7 Lawyers from several NGOs continue working with victims through the domestic system (as opposed to the international court system). After the assembly, Zulma explained that one possible motivation for this insistence on pursuing legal claims in Peruvian courts was that it may be a step within a legal strategy that intends to exhaust all possible national legal avenues to prove these avenues insufficient for protecting defenders’ rights.
In turn, agents themselves are further protected from the risk of retribution because the interactions remain informal; written records are nonexistent.

In 2014, I interviewed Diego Flores when I visited his hamlet with the legal team from Lima. The experiences he narrated to us exemplified the everyday interactions of defenders and mining-friendly law enforcement that eventually conclude with preemptive archiving. Diego Flores is a rondero and luchador who had been battered by police and was impeded from pressing charges against the officers. One day, as Diego made his way home on motorcycle after working at his cousin’s potato field, he observed about thirty police officers on the road before him. Diego cut through the officers until one officer called for him to be stopped. Diego described the encounter: “Me agarraron, me cogieron…La motocicleta la boté ahí en la pista, ni siquiera a un lado, nada. Lo boté ahí porque ya me cogieron a mí, me llevaron a identificarme.”

Diego explained that because he had gone to work in the field he had not taken his identification documents with him. Diego also began to question what the officers were doing at his sister’s home. As it turned out, the convoy of officers had been sent to search Diego’s sister’s home as a result of accusations by Yanacocha subcontractors. Diego asked if the officers had permits to enter her home. These verbal exchanges eventually led to Diego being handcuffed, taken to the police station in a van, and beaten along the way.

Por el camino…la policía a mi me pegaban, me maltrataban, entonces con sus negrazas [armas de fuego] me metían así como puyazos por el cuerpo, no? Para que yo declare, para que yo declare es que, o sea…que “¿yo por que salgo arriba?” que otra vez ya no salga a gritar y a abrir mi boca arriba [a las lagunas de cerca de Conga]. Y que me van a

s “They grabbed hold of me, caught me…The motorcycle I threw right there on the roadway, not even to the side, nothing. I threw it there because they got me, they brought me [in] to identify myself.”
matar algún día, que me van a matar si otra vez salgo. O sea eso me amenazaban a mí.

Esas son amenazas que me daban, por eso a mi un poco de miedo me dio, no? Me intimidan.9

After being set free, Diego returned several days later to press charges against the police officers, but the Prosecutor’s Office would not accept his claims. Diego narrated that they practically shut their doors on him. The office staff he spoke to dismissed his account, alleging that it had been his fault for not carrying proper identification. Diego surmised that this ordeal was a consequence of his activities in the movement.

Isabela Flores, Diego’s sister, was physically assaulted by the police during the unwarranted search of her home, which took place on the same occasion when Diego was arrested. When I asked Isabela if she had tried to denounce these actions, she responded that she had no money to travel to where she needed to press charges. Instead, the prosecutor pressed charges against her. Isabela stated: “Mas bien quizás lo que encima de esto todavía me han [agentes del estado; el procurador] denunciado…Esos maltratos que recibí. Algún día de repente…alguna cosa a la cuenta se podrá hacer.”10 While Isabela’s case is not explicitly connected to the Judiciary’s resolution, it does demonstrate how the “Rule of Law” is shaped through the everyday interactions of defenders and mining-friendly state agents. In this specific situation a measure meant to protect citizens—a prosecutor’s power to press charges against a citizen—is turned on its head in order to persecute luchadorxs.

9 “On the way…the police beat me, mistreated me, then with their negrazas [firearms] they put them like this, like jabs on my body so that I would declare, that I declare, I mean…that “why do I go up?” that I not go again to scream and open my mouth up there [at the lakes near the Conga site]. And that one day they will kill me, that they will kill me if I go out again. I mean that’s how they threatened me. Those were the threats they said, that’s why I felt a little scared, no? They intimidate me.”

10 “Rather, on top of this they [state agents; the public prosecutor] have pressed charges against me…This mistreatment that I received. Perhaps one day…something to account it will be done.”
Effective Legalism: “Justice” in Reverse

When the situation is reversed such that anti-mining activists and community members become defendants, the legal system works in all kinds of expedient and effective ways. The excessive levels of prosecution that movement participants endure confirm the central state’s tendency to criminalize anti-mining protests. Seeing how another activist leader had upwards of 55 charges against his person, most of which came from the local state agents, demands critical questioning as to how these otherwise law-abiding citizens come to occupy such vulnerable social and legal positions. Martín had also explained to us that these processes have moral and psychological effects on activists and their families. While Martín remarked with some degree of satisfaction that none of the claims against him were holding up in court, he was specific as to how these engagements with the juridical apparatus involved reconfiguring ideas about the legal system:

Ahora ya entendemos mejor…como se desenvuelve también esta justicia ordinaria…porque [en] un primer principio…nosotros no tenemos costumbre de estar llamados a cada rato ante la justicia ordinaria pero poco a poco también [nos] hemos ido dando cuenta de que en estos delitos que nos han acusado no eran…como ellos lo dramatizaban…Y nos conformamos…porque nuestra conciencia estaba tranquila.

11 Martín’s use of justicia ordinaria (ordinary justice) refers to a dual justice system legally recognized in Peru. Law 27908 (Law of Rondas Campesinas) acknowledged the right of the Rondas Campesinas to exercise jurisdictional functions and to operate as autonomous and democratic communal organization. This being the case, campesinos in Cajamarca’s highlands are often more familiar with the justice system of the rondas campesinas, referred to as justicia rondera (ronda justice), than with the “ordinary” justice system of the nation-state.

12 “Now we understand much better…how ordinary justice works…because initially we are not used to being called all the time before ordinary justice…but little by little we also became aware that these offenses we are being accused of were not…how they depicted them…And we accepted [this]…because our conscience was clean.”
Martín was not the only movement leader to talk about the negative social implications of being charged for alleged criminal offenses. Another activist noted that these charges affect the social standing of the accused person. People who do not personally know the activist may associate him with questionable morals simply by virtue of knowing that he faces one or multiple criminal charges.

It is hardly coincidental that cases in which luchadorxs are defendants remain open far longer than cases where they are plaintiffs. By maintaining open cases, the central state ensures that defenders remain entangled in its judicial apparatus, a domain in which the state has the upper hand. These practices also encompass the actos de dilatación that Zulma described at the ronda assembly. Ecoterritorial defenders become marginal actors in legal processes where the state has far more power and greater reach. This state tactic parallels the legal strategy of large multinational extractive corporations in other places, such as in Ecuador. Suzana Sawyer (2004; 2007) provides excellent accounts demonstrating how corporations advantageously use legal systems to stall opposition. Indeed, through continual requests for appeals, corporations keep emblematic cases in the courts, meanwhile they continue to legally extract natural resources.

Additionally, perhaps one of the most significant effects of charging activists with dozens of violations is that activists are kept from dedicating more of their time to the movement.\(^{13}\)

Systematic archiving operates through the interpersonal transactions between state agents and defensorxs at the local scale, making it a difficult mechanism to trace. In practice, this often

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\(^{13}\) This is illustrated through the case of Cajamarca’s regional governor, Gregorio Santos, who was imprisoned a couple of weeks after our trip to Cajamarca in June 2014. Officially leading the regional strike in November 2011, Gregorio Santos has been an important force in the struggle against Conga. Santos’s preventive imprisonment (prisión preventiva) obstructs his ability to participate in movement mobilizations and greatly hinders his ability to engage with other activists. While official accusations against him entailed corruption charges, this move by Congress and the Judiciary may alternately be seen as a manifestation of political persecution for his opposition to Conga.
amounts to preemptive archiving. Systematic archiving fits into a larger pattern of legal marginalization; however, the topic of defesonrxs’ archived cases is not frequently discussed in published accounts of the Conga conflict. Finally, the juridical apparatus in Peru operates in a *ceteris paribus* manner, as if activists had unencumbered access to a neutral “Rule of Law;” a manner which safeguards the central state from accusations of human and civil rights’ violations.

Judicializing politics is not equivalent to nor does it achieve justice. It certainly does not take an analysis of ecoterritorial conflicts to comprehend this point; however, examining how judicialization unfolds via an extractivist juridical apparatus reveals the vulnerabilities of the rule of law under a (neo)liberal state. In this litigious legal domain, criminalizing dissent is an effective strategy to legally marginalize ecoterritorial defenders who both resist dispossession of their territory and the expansion of extractive projects. The economics of this process show how the legal system is operationalized to carry out structural violence on citizens who are already marginal subjects of the state because of categories of race, gender, class, and geography. The legislation that legitimated the jurisdictional transfer of Conga cases to the Lambayeque Region goes hand in hand with the other parts of legal marginalization: the fetishization of the law and systematic archiving. This assemblage of juridical mechanisms appeases the liberal sensibilities of external (international) and domestic (non-defender) audiences because of their subscription to liberal, rights-based discursive paradigms. On the ground, these four parts of legal marginalization create barriers for movement leaders and activists to access legal rights. While varying degrees of politicized juridical processes are not unheard of in Peru and other countries, flexibilizing the rule of law to judicialize and repress dissent is a novel approach in an era of growing ecoterritorial conflicts.
Part II: Judicialization in Action

Criminalized Subjects in the Court of Law

When I met luchadorxs in 2014 and 2015, I encountered accounts of the juridical processes they were entangled in, like in Martín Díaz’s case with forty trials pending. At that time, however, I did not have the opportunity to observe any trials. When I returned in 2017, however, I was able to witness what these procedures were like in the courts. In addition to the tactics I described above, in the courtroom I saw how judicialization took place at a scale that was more intimate than discursive analyses of the law allow. Being in the courtroom permitted me to observe the usual patterns, affects, and structures shaping intersubjective relations between actors differentially positioned in the sociopolitical field of ecoterritorial politics. These relations produce the provincial legal spaces where a significant part of codified juridical procedures are enacted. In the following sections I use the courtroom observations to show the juridical apparatus’s interactional power to marginalize, and how this power plays out via mutually-recognized (by both agents and subjects of the state) gendered and classed registers. A look at the courtroom specifically provides a picture of how legal paradoxes are co-produced and how gender gets refracted through judicialization processes on the ground.

When I first went to Celendín, I did not notice the building across the street from the house where I was living. Said building housed Celendín’s branch of the Corte Superior de Justicia de Cajamarca (Superior Court of Cajamarca). The building itself is unimpressive, if remarkable because of its finished exterior when compared to other buildings around town. It is a brick and concrete structure unlike the older adobe houses and buildings in the city center. The second floor has a balcony, accessible through one of the offices on that level.
The Chadín II trial was taking place in Celendín, in those same courts diagonally across the street. I had heard from my collaborators that this was an upcoming trial, and when I asked if I might attend the hearing they said I would be able to. The hearing began the trial of the case; a criminal case concerning defensorxs’ activism in opposition to the mega-hydrodam project in the valley of Celendín. The compañerxs on trial had been indicted for a mobilization in Cortegana, one of Celendín’s districts.

The morning of the trial, I walked up the narrow set of stairs with the small group of defendants that had gathered outside the door to the second floor. Silvia was with them. She was the only luchadora I recognized, and I exchanged greetings with her. We waited on the second-floor landing for some time. In that interval, a few more defensorxs joined the initial five women and five men who had been waiting outside. At 8:30, we were let into a small room toward the back of the building which served as the courtroom. Two desks faced the doorway, where the legal counsel sat. Entering the room, to the right of the door, there were a few rows of benches where the audience, defendants, and plaintiffs sit. At the other end of the room, in front of the audience, and to the left of the entrance, was another office desk; the judge’s bench.

The judge was a middle-aged woman, with portly bearing. As the judge performed the preliminary motions before opening the hearing, she dismissively told a compañera, a defendant carrying her baby in arms, that she could not have a baby in the courtroom. The judge barely looked the woman’s way when she said, “está prohibido traer a niños al juicio. Ya les he dicho.” (It’s forbidden to bring children to a trial. I’ve already told you.) I had seen this compañera with the baby on the landing, but I had not realized she was a defendant in the case. The compañera tried to explain to the judge that she had to bring her daughter to court because there was no one she could have left her with at home. The judge remained impassive. “También tienen que tener
un poco de contemplación...Que les encarguen a alguien. Acá no deben entrar [los niños].”
([You] also need to have some thoughtfulness…Leave them [children] in someone’s charge. They [children] should not come in here.)

Simultaneously, Daniel, a compañero from the PIC, had been taking photos inside the room on his cellphone. Daniel was sitting in the bench in front of me and the flashes from his phone’s camera caught the prosecutor’s attention and that of the judge. The lead prosecutor complained to the judge that the baby (the compañera’s daughter) appeared in the photographs being taken by Daniel. A debate ensued about whether the baby’s picture was actually taken. The judge eventually proclaimed: she did not give permission for photography. Furthermore, should anyone wish to take any photographs, they must first ask for her permission. She did not want her court room to be turned into a “show.”

The compañera with the infant finally resolved to take turns holding the baby with her partner, also on trial. Whomever of the two was engaged by the judge remained in the courtroom while the other carried the baby in the hall. A light on Daniel’s cell phone, however, caught the judge’s eye once more. She scolded Daniel, demanding that he shut his phone off. The prosecutor then accused Daniel of giving him a dirty look. The judge finally asked for “calma” (keeping calm).

The hearing began with the judge inquiring about notifications to the processed defendants, asking those that were notified to present themselves. Lizbet was called, but she was not present. The judge noted that the address on file is missing the neighborhood (Lizbet’s official records list her domicile in Lima). The judge concluded that Lizbet must not be present because the notification did not have the precise address. The public defender substituting the
defensorxs’ lawyer simply shrugged his shoulders when the judge looked at him for acknowledgment. He did not know why Lizbet was not present. The defendants waited quietly in the audience as the judge performed this “saneamiento” (clearing of or rectification of inconsistencies in the legal documentation presented for the case). Occasionally, the compañeroxs whispered among themselves. The baby, having been brought back into the courtroom at some point, fussed. While some of the compañeroxs managed to find a seat, more joined us just past eight thirty, so I found myself along with others standing in the back of the room.

The trial began just before nine in the morning. The principal charge was on “disturbios y violencia” (disturbance and violence) against society. As “saneamiento” was the first stage of the hearing, it was a process that had to be carried out before moving on to the substantive details of the case. The current president of the local rondas campesinas was also among the accused. He had arrived shortly after we were let into the courtroom and introduced himself as the ronda president. He explained to the judge that he was also a beneficiary of the “medida cautelar” (precautionary measures dictated by the IACHR). “A ver, hágame entender qué es está medida cautelar” (let’s see, help me understand what this precautionary measure is) was the judge’s response. It was hard to tell what the judge made of the precautionary measures, if anything at all. The judge never again referred to it during this hearing, nor did she ask for the measure’s documentation.

Though the main defense lawyer was absent, one of the defendants had brought his own personal counsel. When it was his turn to present himself, his legal counsel argued that his client was not the person the court was seeking because there was confusion about the identity of the person the prosecutor had charged. The lawyer indicated that there are two people with the same name, one from Celendín and one from Cortegana. Though his client had received the subpoena,
he was, in fact, the incorrect Mariano Quiroz. The judge replied that the initial paperwork had his client’s national identity number. The defense lawyer contended that the other Mariano Quiroz, the one from Cortegana, was the person they were seeking. The woman sitting near the judge, who appeared to be the judge’s clerk, told the judge that there were six people with the same name, Mariano Quiroz. Still, at that moment the prosecutor tried to submit evidence to the judge about past notifications to the Mariano Quiroz present in court on this day—as if to justify charging this Mariano Quiroz.

Appearing to move on to a new matter, the judge announced that the hearing would nonetheless take place with the defendants present. When the judge asked defendants if they wished to continue with their regular counsel, who still had not shown up, Silvia quietly encouraged the compañerxs to say, yes, they wished to keep him. The judge provided their absent counsel forty-eight hours to justify his absence. And then the hearing returned once more to the issue of Mariano Quiroz. The prosecutor called for correcting this issue by simply switching the identification numbers to reflect the Mariano Quiroz present in the room. Quiroz’s lawyer objected, noting that the identity of the accused “[estuvo] mal emplazado desde un inicio” (was incorrectly subpoenaed from the beginning). The prosecutor retorted that an auxiliary file about the identification of Quiroz exists, suggesting that he could show it in court right that moment. The judge once more pointed out that there are a number of people with the same name. The defendant finally intervened. He stated that he had never lived in Cortegana. Eventually, the judge dismissed Mariano Quiroz as an accused party because the identity of the person—the actual Mariano Quiroz—at the mobilization could not be confirmed with certainty. (Which Mariano of the six was it?)

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The hearing concluded at nine fifty because the judge had other cases on her agenda. This day’s hearing had been solely devoted to the judge’s saneamiento of the list of accused persons and the witnesses. Those who were not present, including Lizbet, have been deemed reo *contumaz* (in contempt of the court). She asked the defendants to help her notify the other accused parties. José, one of the defendants, was represented by the PIC’s organizational counsel since José was the director of the PIC. Thus, José’s lawyer asked to interrupt the judge’s request to bring to her attention that his client, José, had been improperly notified. He argued that José should be dismissed, like Mariano Quiroz, because of the way he was notified. The judge retorted that he should let her finish her resolution. She declared a future hearing date when she expected all the correct defendants to be present.

"Todos para bien, todos para mal," court was adjourned.14

*Lo femenino on Trial*15

The portrait of the courtroom at the Chadín II hearing is a *mis-en-scène*, a sort of staging of the judicial proceedings that define defensorxs’ engagements within the juridical apparatus of an extractivist security state (the topic of chapter two). My aim is not to provide an account of all the goings-on at the hearing, but by eliciting the tempo of the interactions, the structure of the dialogue, as well as gesturing toward the silences, my goal is to re-create the texture of a legal space that comes into being when these trials unfold. Of course, in this instance, my subjectivity as an anthropologist frames the re-presentation of the courtroom as a particular legal space, with its emphasis on moments that may not have caught the attention of my collaborators. For

14 This phrase adjourned the court hearing. The line translates to “all for good, all for bad.”
15 *Femenino* refers in Spanish to various concepts related to women. In formal contexts, it stands for the female sex, *sexo femenino*, since sex is a masculine noun in Spanish. In general terms, it may also refer to a feminine quality or related to women more broadly. I play on this ambiguity which Spanish allows rather than choosing to translate to English because the way internalized and structural gendered inequalities operate is just as messy.
example, the main prosecutor continually complained to the judge about what the defense counsel was doing. The prosecutor bemoaned that the defense counsel and audience (specifically Daniel) were laughing at him. Lawyers on both sides spent some of their time on their phones—likely facebook surfing, and yet, the prosecutor worried he was not being taken seriously.

The trial reveals how the criminalization of protest, and the persecution of luchadorxs, compounds the social demands placed on women. In this instance, there were different axes of inequalities that became manifest in what might have been for the judge a minor part of the proceedings. While luchadores from Celendín had gone to Cortegana to protest the *mesa de diálogo* that took place between district officials and hydrodam representatives, a large number of the participants in the mobilization were from the local area. Thus, most of the defendants lived in Cortegana. Those luchadores who traveled from Celendín were ones in leadership or the more active members of the PIC, for example, Lizbet, José, and Pilar (who was not an accused party in this case). Because the hearings were taking place in Celendín, defendants had to ensure mobility to and from Celendín, regardless of the number of days the trial lasted. This meant days away from work, whether it was farming or other labor. So there were costs of travels and the loss of income from missed labor.

For the compañera who had brought her daughter to court there was no support available at home that would have allowed her to attend the trial without her daughter. Whether the compañera had been able to afford paid childcare, this may not have been an option where she lives. In the small district of Cortegana, with fewer than ten thousand inhabitants, it is improbable that one would find something like a day care center, called “nido,” like the ones found in Celendín and Cajamarca. Motherhood, thus, becomes a liability for women when they are judicialized. The juridical process is not structured to facilitate the presence of women in
their multiple social roles. The judge’s off-hand comment to “encargar” the child (leave in the charge of another) indicated a near objectification of the child; the child should be rid of, like a package; taken elsewhere, anywhere but the courtroom.

This opens up a discussion on a spatial scale. As Massey (2005) argues, spaces are constructed through social relations. I analyze this moment in the courtroom using Massey’s framework because the courtroom became a space hostile to a defendant with a child. In the most benign scenario, the courtroom as a place forbidden to children is a de facto way of making parents, but mothers especially, unwelcome. In practice, it is almost as exclusive of women as children: the compañera literally had to step out of her own hearing at various points in order to be compliant with the judge’s request. However, by stepping out, she was also technically breaking the rules of the Law—her required presence in a court of law. One way or the other, the compañera could not win.

And, yet, there were times when the baby was in the courtroom with her mother, after the judge’s initial admonition. At these moments, it seemed that the judge either no longer cared or no longer noticed (if) the child was present. If the judge is in technical respects the highest voice of order (and command) in her court room, then the baby’s presence seemed to undermine the judge’s almighty power. If the judge was exercising subtle discretion and, as an act of benevolence, permitted the child in her courtroom, then her actions prove the rules of the law flexible and that their applicability is neither universal nor equal. In the latter scenario, this judge at a branch of a regional judicial power (a court of the Region of Cajamarca) proves to be an agent of the local state whose practices ground the Law into an intersubjective negotiation.
My recounting of the hearing does not adequately capture the demeanor of the judge. Yet we catch glimpses of the ways structures of oppression are embodied, maintained, and reproduced in the judge’s disposition and through the interactions between the various actors in the courtroom. The judge’s tone and mannerisms exuded a slight contempt laced with arrogance toward most everyone in the court, but especially the defendants. Children are forbidden in the courtroom, “ya les he dicho” (I’ve already told you), the judge had uttered. It is impossible to recreate all the affective tones communicated in that moment; the haughty indifference with which the judge stated that she had “already told them” communicated “I don’t care.” The judge did not care what the circumstances of the defendants were. Everyone in the courtroom was to follow her rules, read the rules of the law, without exception. This was, indeed, the judge’s courtroom and she was invested in ensuring every person there felt it.

The judge reminded me of post-middle-age women faculty I run into every once in a while within the walls of the academy. I think of them as the women scholars of the ‘old cadre.’ These are the women professors who came of academic age in the 1970s and 80s in Euro-Anglo academies who had to forge their way through male-dominant and sexist departments. Many—most—made it by proving they were good enough or better than male colleagues despite being women. It was a showing up every day at work ready to battle the patriarchy by proving that they were not soft and emotional, in other words, they did not display “feminine” weaknesses. Thus, their passage and acceptance relied not on making space for women and the feminine, but by also participating in the subordination of perceived “feminine” attributes—by rejecting what was considered weak.

That was another time. And this is not to say that all older women faculty who succeeded despite the patriarchy adopted the same carapace. Today, we might recognize the toughness of
these women faculty as a mechanism for survival in a sexist academic world—something women
in parallel professional fields also faced. That their academic identities became tied to tough
personas is evidence of how the internalization of patriarchal oppressions may become part of
those intellectuals who study and do critical theory for a living. It should go without saying that I
do not say this to excuse or condemn these faculty members, although we should always strive
toward holding any colleague accountable for these behaviors and practices.

The digression about the academy serves to contextualize what are appreciably heavily
masculine spaces of the Law in Peru, and even more notably in Cajamarca. Most judges of
Cajamarca’s Supreme Court are men. The judge in the Chadín II trial was likely molded in a
legal terrain embedded with highly gendered biases. If so, that morning at the hearing the judge
was exercising authority informed by multiple layers of motivations. As the highest authority of
the Law, she embodies the supremacy of the Rule of Law. Concurrently, the judge embodies the
patterns of internalized patriarchal structures which have required that she show up as a tough,
indifferent figure in her role as judge. Classed and racial prejudices, which are very much part of
the social field of urban-rural interactions in provincial Peru, are intertwined with these axes of
domination.

It follows, then, that the judge’s patronizing attitude toward the defendants was informed
by the judge’s perception of their inferiority based on class, race, gender, and politics. The judge,
for instance, was a middle-aged mestiza with lighter skin than most of the defendants.
Luchadorxs’ bronze skin had the deeper brown hues that comes with lives devoted to outdoor
farm work. Thus, their appearance gave away their classed and racialized social positions.
“También tienen que tener un poco de contemplación” (You also need to have some
thoughtfulness), the judge had patronizingly told the defendants. That the judge’s response to the
child’s presence had exuded an air of arrogance belied the judge’s impartiality as the Law’s emissary.

Adding insult to her injurious conduct, the judge also suggested that the defendants and the audience were trying to make a “show” out of her courtroom. The judge actually used the anglicism “show,” which most people in the courtroom would have understood if they watch Peruvian television. “Show,” a popular anglicism, has a classed dimension linked to Peruvian television programming. Peruvian television since the 2010s has been rapt by a particular type of “variety” show that involves “reality-based” competitions between teams. This type of show is a spectacle-based staging of scantily-clad model-athlete participants who compete in a series of obstacle courses. The programs represent the kind of television that might be defined as low-brow; with little substance aside from a quick fix of mindless banter and inane plots and dialogue meant to entertain the widest audience possible. The sexualization of participants’ bodies adds to their mass appeal.

This type of spectacle entertainment made-for-the-masses was what the judge alluded to when she rebuked the audience, and Daniel in particular, about turning her courtroom into a show. Whether or not defendants—and the rest of us—were attempting to create a spectacle was not the issue. The judge’s classed affect had already condemned the defendants as members of a group whose predisposition to disorderly conduct, because of their race and class, made them a

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16 The programs are glitzy and loud, with hosts narrating the events of each challenge. When I was in Cajamarca, it seemed like there was some version of this kind of program always on tv. I often caught snippets of a show when I was having lunch or dinner at a restaurant in Celendín or Cajamarca, or when I visited a friends’ homes. Frequently, the programs devoted as much time to the participants’ private lives as to the competition. The transformation of contestants’ intimate lives into public matters demonstrated that these programs became an extension of the tv programs of the “farándula” (show business world) that had gained popularity in the preceding decade. Now, mass audiences were held captive not simply by gossip reporting on the “private” lives of artists and actors, but the private became public as the affairs, feuds, and controversy were openly discussed in real-time with the protagonists of those controversies. These shows have been immensely successful in Peru, going through multiple generations of competing “teams.”
threat to the civilized values of the courtroom. Because large-scale extractive projects are taking place in Peru’s provincial hinterlands, those people who become luchadorxs tend to be farmers dependent on agriculture and livestock raising. By extension, as a demographic group rural communities tend to occupy the lowest rungs of education, income, and health indices. It is not without irony that some of the charges against the luchadorxs were “disturbios y violencia” (disturbances and violence). Mobilized in this way, the law “as an instrument of governance…allows the state to represent itself as the custodian of civility against disorder” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012, 79). Legal spaces thus conjure images of unruly mobs—the lower classes that are prone to riotous behavior. Uncivilized company, at best. Protesting was effectively rendered a threat to civilization—to the existence of society.

Luchadorxs, and farmers, have a nuanced understanding of what it means to be before the agents of the rule of Law, however. It would have come as a great surprise to me if they had actually behaved in ways that would jeopardize their freedom—especially when they stood accused of serious crimes. After we stepped into the room and found seats, we stayed in our seats, and everyone spoke in low voices. While photography might have been impermissible in the room, Daniel was trying to inconspicuously take his pictures by avoiding unnecessary movement. It was the camera’s flash that gave him away, not any alleged attempts by Daniel to turn the court’s proceedings into a spectacle. To be sure, the back-and-forth arguing between Daniel and the main prosecutor factored into the judge’s admonition about creating a “show.” Daniel denied that he had taken a photo of the child, but the prosecutor claimed he had. So, like a parent, the judge intervened to settle the dispute by suggesting order and seriousness in the courtroom.
The judge’s disposition materializes the courtroom as a space that is not meant for ecoterritorial defenders—especially women. Nevertheless, ecoterritorial defenders have no choice but to enter the juridical apparatus and participate in the judicialization of politics. Were luchadorxs to brazenly reject this process, they would be held in contempt of court and further penalized. Their criminalization is a repressive force that coerces them into engaging with the state and the rule of Law on uneven footing in a paradoxical legal space. Despite luchadorxs’ right to a fair hearing and trial, the courtroom is an excluding space that questions their presence at every turn.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I examined the criminalization of protest as a political strategy to preserve the central state’s legitimacy in maintaining and defending its extractivist development model. By first defining the various parts that constitute the legal marginalization of ecoterritorial defenders, I began to outline how paradoxical legal spaces are co-produced through the judicialization of ecoterritorial politics. I argued that the economics of judicialization, legal retaliation through legislation that impedes ease of access to the law, fetishization of human and civil rights discourses, and practices of systematic archiving build on pre-existing systems of oppression to further ensure the marginalization of populations resisting the expansion of the extractive industries. Then I showed the interactional dynamics in the microcosm of the courtroom that carry out and reinforce legal marginalization, highlighting its gendered and classed dimensions.

As the legal system is re-purposed for the economic ends of the state, it becomes another mechanism for inflicting structural violence on state subjects already in marginal socio-economic
and gender positions. The circumstances that shape women’s lives, in particular, cause defensoras to be less able to present themselves before the courts, making them vulnerable to being held in contempt of court, with fewer possibilities for pressing charges, and as the targets of biases that impede equal access to fair adjudication. In this way, Peru’s “Rule of Law” is not meant to include women. In dissecting the exchanges between the judge and the compañera with her child, I demonstrated how women are susceptible to further marginalization when they are prevented from showing up in these formal juridical spaces as mothers. Gendered political persecution means that women, like Diego’s sister or those directly participating in the struggle, are denied entrance in the juridical apparatus.

Both parts of this chapter on the judicialization of politics evince how the protraction of trials, sometimes for years, holds defensorxs captive by means of low intensity judicialization that hums along through the pettiness of local prosecutors. Criminalization effectively places luchadorxs at the legal margins through what attorney Zulma Villa called “actos de dilatación” (delaying actions). Although marginalization results from the interactions between state and civil actors, we also see how marginalization is driven by state strategies of political “containment” (Gustafson 2010). The “politics of ‘containment’” operate through liberal, democratizing processes that allegedly provide protection to citizens. However, as Gustafson (2010) notes, democratization efforts coming from central states may in effect be part of a strategy to contain or domesticate insurgent politics, much in the way that rights’ discourses can bear down on the political struggles of indigenous and other marginalized social groups. Criminalization therefore entangles defenders in legal mechanisms that traffic in legal hindrances and efficacy based on which political actor is on the receiving end of the law. Ultimately, these legal strategies of
repression permit the legal political persecution of luchadorxs while staving off accusations of undemocratic or authoritarian measures.
Chapter 4

The Politics of Everyday Life

I wish to open notions of power and resistance to a more diverse politics of agency, involving the dense web of relations between coercion, negotiation, complicity, refusal, dissembling, mimicry, compromise, affiliation and revolt.

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*

This chapter brings us back to one of the theoretical anchors of this dissertation: the heteropatriarchal regimes of power at work in the extractive frontier. The two parts of this chapter show how these regimes shape the terrain of struggle, inflecting relations between compañeros and compañeras. Within this “dense web of relations,” women exert a feminist agency within the conditions that structure their politicization. The “politics of agency,” as McClintock suggests, is not a zero sum game. My goal in this chapter is to describe how Cajamarcan defensoras assert their political identities. Defensoras are asserting an autonomy that re-draws boundaries and charts new cartographies of socio-political relations. In so doing, they counter the extractive security state’s reterritorialization of their *cuerpo territorio*.

In Part one, I write about who my collaborators are—who they have become—by navigating a masculinized terrain of struggle. Part one is a look at their collective political identity, *defensoras*, as it is multiply-enacted. By this I mean that the politics of their identity can
be multiple and varying, even when politicization has occurred via several overarching, formative channels. This multiplicity attests to women’s heterogeneous social positions. The vignettes I outline in this part represent a first incursion into the nuances of women’s conceptualization of their role in the struggle. I portray how my collaborators inhabit their roles in organizing meetings as well as in meetings convened to strengthen their defense. In juxtaposing the various scenes where their identities come to the fore, I attend to one of the central structuring forces that inform defensoras’ politics: confronting the machista socio-political environment they navigate in the everyday of ecoterritorial defense.

Part two hones in on how the compañeras fulfill their commitments to the struggle. Political lives are their present lives. These are lives that integrate the struggle to survive into the whole of their being. Survival is a struggle anchored in principles of cuerpo territorio that upend heterosexualist patriarchal structures not through the boldness of revolutionary transformation, but through the radicalness of showing up day after day as who they have unapologetically become. Machismo still rears its head as the vernacularized Latin American sexism that gets called out and refused through defensoras’ autonomy. However, defensoras’ politicization is not solely about gender agency. It is about how their gendered agency in ecoterritorial defense is a counter hegemonic positioning vis-à-vis the capitalist patriarchal system that precaritizes compañeras’ labor, economy, and livelihoods.

I have fused these two parts together because the economic is inseparable from the patriarchal order in Cajamarca and beyond. Capitalist patriarchy structures the extractive frontier, and it is embedded in the matrix of domination (Collins 2000) in which defensoras’ lives are caught. I also channel Kimberly Theidon’s (2013) work in post-conflict Andean communities in southern Peru in this chapter. Rather than departing from theoretical concepts,
Theidon (2013) analyzes and writes about post-conflict reconciliation in the midst of terror, pain, and violence using the vocabulary Peruvians themselves use. I write about defensoras’ lives in this vein to demonstrate how defensoras show up in the everyday of the struggle. Through my discussion in both parts, I summon the varying forms of feminism defensoras fashion for themselves.
Part I

The discussion for this part is largely centered around two types of organizational spaces, an *encuentro* (gathering) and an internal meeting. Both are mixed-gender and locally-based events. These organizational spaces differ from the kind defensoras are invited to attend, often in other cities, where they are guests with a participant role, e.g., a women’s regional or national encuentro. The following conversations and scenes sketch the challenges that shape defensoras’ positions within the struggle, and their efforts to assert their political identity. This portrait of defensoras’ interactions when they encounter machismo, and how they narrativize this heteropatriarchal force that extends from the external social order into the movement, dwells on the gender dynamics that shape their politicization.

*Escuela Hugo Blanco*

The *Escuela Hugo Blanco* (Hugo Blanco School) is a collaborative project between PIC and Programa Democracia y Transformación Global\(^1\) (PDTG), in alliance with the cluster of Lima-based NGOs that support ecoterritorial defense in the region. The *Escuela Hugo Blanco* resembles a cross between a teach-in and “Universidad del Pueblo” (University of the People) in the style of APRA’s\(^2\) “popular” universities in 1920s and 30s Peru. The “school” is not a physical space; it is an intensive teaching and learning retreat intended to take place every three months. In practice, they did not always take place quarterly. Being that PIC is a Celendín-based coalition, “la escuela es exclusivamente de Celendín” (the school is exclusively from Celendín), Lizbet once told me. Indeed, at the time I was living in Celendín, all the schools had been held in

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\(^1\) Democracy and Global Transformation Program

\(^2\) Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) is the longest lasting political party in Peru. It was established by Peruvian intellectual Victor Haya de la Torre when he was exiled in Mexico in the 1920s.
Celendín. The topic for a school was chosen beforehand and attendance was by invitation. Topics were usually issues of immediate political importance. Lizbet had further described the schools as “escuelas de líderes y lideresas” (schools for men and women leaders) where attendees cultivate leadership skills in different topic areas (themes).

The inaugural school was in honor of its namesake, cuzqueño revolutionary Hugo Blanco, the second school was in honor of an assassinated compañero from Yagén, Hitler Rojas. The third school, which I did not attend because I was not yet well-acquainted with the women’s organization in Celendín, had been in honor of Máxima Acuña de Chaupe. Acuña de Chaupe is a renowned anti-Conga luchadora who has achieved global visibility in international environmental justice circles. One of the goals of the Máxima school was to cultivate women’s leadership. Lizbet emphasized: it was to be exclusively for women. Lizbet was one of the organizers for the Máxima school and, gradually, the organization of schools was moving toward greater inclusion of women in planning and programming.

I was allowed to join the fourth school in September. This one was called the “Luis Daniel Quiros (sic) Amayo Escuela Hugo Blanco,” in honor of defensora Doris’s late husband. Luis Daniel, known affectionately as “Nelo,” was a local teacher and the founder of the first ecological association in the province. Nelo passed away in 2013, but until then he had been a member of PIC and a committed ecoterritorial defender. The school lasted from Friday through Sunday. It was held at a rustic restaurant in Celendín with ample outdoor space for activities. The entire restaurant had been rented for the purposes of the school. At this school, Karen, a rondera and defensora from Bambamarca, was the only defensora to lead a workshop. The remaining workshops were led by compañeros or by PDTG members.
Karen had been invited to talk about *Justicia Rondera* (Ronda Campesina Justice). Karen began her talk by pointing out the proportion of men to women. She lamented the scarcity of women present. “Me hubiese gustado que realmente hubiera más mujeres, también. Y veo que hay más varones.” She believed she would see more women participating in future schools.

Karen’s presentation started with a historical account of the rondas campesinas in Bambamarca, which she dated back to 1978 (see also Starn 1999). Karen explained that for a time, women and men were part of the same organization, that is, the same rondas. Eventually, women formed their own rondas: *rondas femeninas* (women’s rondas). She noted that Bambamarca’s ronderas have a strong organization, but ronderas felt a lack of their own space.

No teníamos las mujeres realmente el espacio, el lugar. Donde un varón iba a una reunión y tomaba las decisiones adelante. La mujer simplemente era para que vaya a cocinar, y luego de cocinar sirva al varón, regrese, lave las ollas, y eso era todo. O sentarse a lo último y no tomar decisiones. Y eso, había bastante machismo. Y más cuando las personas por ejemplo…si alguien hablaba cuando tomaban de repente [las decisiones]…no [la tomaban] en cuenta porque era joven y tal vez no tenía la gran experiencia para que fuera a decir. Pero sí [tomaban en cuenta] a un compañero varón. O a un compañero mayor, sí había un poco de respeto. No había compañeros jóvenes. Mayormente eran ya de edad, que eran los compañeros que habían organizado las rondas.

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3 “I would have liked for there to really have been more women, too. And I see there are more men.”

4 “We, women, did not really have the space, the place. Where the man went to a meeting and made decisions ahead [of women]. The woman was simply for cooking and, after cooking, for serving the man, returning, washing pots, and that was it. Or to sit at the end and not make any decisions. And there was a lot of machismo. Even more when people for example…if someone talked when [decisions] were perhaps made…they would not take [her] into account because she was young and perhaps did not have a lot of experience about what to say. But they would [take
Karen’s history of the rondas in Bambamarca references how women and young people, and especially young women, were silenced at ronda meetings. Indeed, ronderas were consigned to the manual (as opposed to intellectual) labor and housekeeping tasks at the meetings—cooking, serving food, and cleaning. If ronderas managed to perform these duties and the meetings were still going, then they might take a back seat. Although ronderas branched off to establish rondas femeninas a few years after the original rondas were created, it was only recently that they raised enough money to acquire a house now serving as the headquarters of the rondas femeninas of Bambamarca.

Today, “[las mujeres] como que hemos salido un poco más. Y el varón como que ha empezado a dejar un poco más el machismo...Ahora, por ejemplo, en Bambamarca, hay una mesa donde va a haber una asamblea o una reunión, tiene que haber una mujer ahí. Porque también tiene que tomar las decisiones.”

5 Earlier in the year, I had witnessed exactly what Karen was calling for: the inclusion of women in panels. When I had just arrived back in Peru for my long-term ethnographic research, I accompanied the IIDS/IILS legal team to the “XII Congreso Regional Rondero” (XII Regional Rondero Congress) in the province of Chota. This was where I first met Karen in person. When I entered Chota’s coliseum, where the congress was held, I noted that there was a woman sitting at the board’s table in the front of the assembly. One of the speakers initiating the meeting declared that three ronderas would be elected into the regional rondas campesinas executive board. Karen herself was voted to act as one of two “relatores” (chroniclers) during the two-day congress. The person who had volunteered Karen for the role into account] a male compañero. Or an older compañero, yes, there was some respect. There were no young compañeros. They were mostly older, they were the ones that had organized the rondas.”

5 “[Women] are going out a little more. And the man has, like, begun to leave machismo a bit more. Now, for example, in Bambamarca, there is a table where there will be an assembly or a meeting, there has to be a woman there. Because [they] also have to make decisions.”
was a rondera who explicitly pointed out that a woman was needed in the interim executive board. At the Hugo Blanco school, Karen went on explaining that presently there are more women “at the table” in meetings in Bambamarca.

Nevertheless, while some men are beginning to support women going out to organize and “capacitarse” (train)—even acknowledging that women may become leaders—ronderas face a defiant society in Bambamarca. Sometimes, people will taunt ronderas doing ronda work, yelling things at them like: “quieren ser alcaldesas ahora” ([they/you] want to be mayors now). On other occasions, ronderas have been subordinated by their rondero compañeros. During the mobilizations at the lakes close to Conga, women collected food donations to be brought to the defenders camping near the site, but compañeros were the ones to deliver the foodstuff. The ronderos would then tell defenders that they had collected the food, rendering the contribution of the ronderas invisible.

Listening to Karen speak at the school, I noted how remarkable it was that this presentation on ronda justice devoted as much time as it did to machismo. But I was not surprised because Karen is not just any rondera. Karen has been an executive committee member in Bambamarca’s rondas femeninas. With the support of the Lima-based NGOs, she is also being groomed for broader leadership roles. Back in April, Lizbet mentioned that Karen was chosen as the other representative from Cajamarca to the women’s pre-FOSPA coordinating meetings in Lima. Lizbet has more experience than Karen in leading trainings, but NGO staff are promoting leadership skills among more defensoras. Bringing Karen onboard as one of Cajamarca’s representatives was a step toward getting her more involved in leading roles. Later, Karen would also be asked to represent Cajamarca at the Encuentro Feminista de América Latina y el Caribe (Feminist Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean) in Uruguay in November. At the
escuela, the results of these efforts were tangible. Karen was a confident presenter who even reflected on her own trajectory, noting that she had not always been comfortable standing in front of an audience.

Karen benefitted from the combination of a ronda formation, participation in feminist trainings and meetings, and an assertive disposition that was unafraid to challenge masculine insecurities. So, when she mentioned yet another anecdote of machismo in the rondas, I perfectly imagined the scene as it might have taken place. At the event Karen recalled, an older rondero had only welcomed compañeros. Karen proceeded to interrupt him by asking: what about the compañeras? Karen had not been afraid to speak up and interrogate the status quo, even of an elder. Karen explained to the audience that the rondas femeninas are like a school for women. “Las mujeres se forman” (women are educated) through their participation in the rondas. Women come into a consciousness about their positionality in relations of power and the various interlocking social, political, and economic systems they engage with. Still, “machismo o egoísmo” (machismo or selfishness) leads men, compañeros, to believe that women’s empowerment means bringing men down. These ronderos believe that women holding leadership roles means women will be on top of men. Men’s fear about entering a subordinate position effectively confirms that men relate to women in oppressive ways since they assume an alleged inversion means subjugation.

Karen and other ronderas were increasingly willing to engage in direct action to challenge machismo, both of the state and within the ranks of their own rondero compañeros. In

6 Karen snaps (Ahmed 2017) at her senior compañero. She embodies her “snappiness” by calling out the androcentrism of Spanish and the compañero’s laziness in neglecting “compañeras” in his address. In Spanish, the pluralization of nouns referring to mixed gender groups defaults to the masculine (regardless if it is a non-masculine majority).
the middle of her presentation, Karen told us about a cabinet minister’s visit to Bambamarca to discuss environmental liabilities resulting from the Tantayhuatay mining project. Women were not invited to the meeting convened with the minister, so Karen and a handful of ronderas revolted. They demanded space for their voices. The compañeros conceded, but when Karen became frustrated when she noticed that the talks were going nowhere. She wanted to bring more attention to what was happening inside. The ronderas then began protesting outside the meeting’s venue exclaiming that they would not allow the minister to leave without an agreement being settled with the people. Instead of supporting the ronderas’ action, compañeros came out of the meeting to warn them: “si algo pasa es la culpa de ustedes” (if something happens it’s your fault). “Something” being the government not granting them what they were asking for. As if ronderas had taken a cue from compañeras in the 2006 Oaxaca uprising (Stephen 2013), the ronderas called media outlets. “Entonces, nosotros decíamos: ‘Y ahora qué vamos a hacer?’ Empezamos a traer la prensa, avisábamos toda la prensa, toda la radio: que vengan.” In the end, their pressure compelled the minister to a resolution and, that night, the compañeros thanked the ronderas.

When Karen ended her presentation, I did not get to talk to Bambamarcan compañeros about their thoughts on how Karen had described the situation in their rondas. However, a few months before that school, I got to hear what PIC compañeros thought about the women’s organization in Celendín. The section that follows revolves around a casual conversation that came out of a chance encounter with PIC compañeros in Celendín. It is a vignette serving as a conceptual connector between the scenes that begin and end this part of the chapter. The

7 “So, we said among ourselves: ‘And what will we do now?’ We started to bring the press, we notified all the presses, the radio, to come.’”
conversation I had with the compañeros illustrates a broader set of sexist attitudes that circumscribe spaces of ecoterritorial struggle.

“Se canibalizan”: Compañeros “progre” en la lucha (“They cannibalize each other”: “Progre” Compañeros in the Struggle)

One evening, I ran into several compañeros at a cafetín (small café) on José Galvez street, just a block off the central plaza. This cafetín was one of my usual evening destinations around town. I went there for the strong brews and delicious humitas (sweet corn and cheese tamales) and tamales. On this occasion, compañeros were gathered there before attending the wake of a compañero’s father who had suddenly passed away. José invited me to sit with them, and we chatted some about the murals I had been painting with Pilar.

Eventually, Wilmer, a luchador who teaches at one of the public schools, asked me about my project. After describing my research, he and another compañero proceeded to give me their opinions about the state of the women’s organization. Wilmer thought that the compañeras tended to fight too much among themselves. He reaffirmed this by comparing the luchadoras to six women he had worked with in a teacher’s union committee. Wilmer did not understand: Why was it that women were so divisive? It was either due to jealousy or internal rivalries. Or something like that. I pushed him a bit more on that point, and he clarified that it had not always been that way. When the organization formed, the compañeras worked well together, but it was perhaps when the NGOs got involved that things started changing. Wilmer specifically referred to DEMUS, pointing out how organizations like it were introducing topics like “género” (gender) and gender violence. The other compañero who had been conversing with us offered an

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8 The national teacher’s union is the SUTEP (Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú), which stands for Unitary Union of Education Workers of Peru.
alternative explanation as if to tentatively suggest that external actors were not the cause of internal divisions. He thought it might have been due to qualms about managing the organization’s purse. Although these compañeros confidently provided their opinions on the matter, they were hesitant to ascertain with total conviction what was at the root of compañeras’ discord. Our conversation did not go any further because they had to attend the wake, but, before they left, the other compañero proposed: “es que se canibalizan” (it’s that they cannibalize [each other]).

In comparing defensoras and his female colleagues, Wilmer revealed his stereotyping of women. He perceived them as inherently prone to bickering and jealousy. The undertone was that women are emotionally-driven and their inability to their emotions contained impedes the rational order of their organization. And that, by extent, this does not occur on the men’s side of the struggle because they do not behave in that manner. It was as if Wilmer was saying: men are either above it (they successfully separate their emotions from their work) or not naturally prone to acting in those ways. If compañeros from Celendín considered themselves more progressive than their counterparts in Bambamarca, something I also heard from defensorxs in Celendín, the machismo that operates within the struggle is subtler.

Wilmer’s sexist remarks constitute micro-aggressions toward women that perpetuate machista social values (another form of the continuum of violence). Wilmer, a college-educated professional, did not consider himself sexist. This is how he could be as up-front about his opinion on the women’s organization when we were at the café. Our relationship did not merit the kind of trust that would allow deeper-felt and potentially controversial opinions. Moreover, should he have believed that his statement would be offensive to me, an outside researcher woman, he would not have shared it with me. Perhaps he might have expressed it after leaving or
only in the company of men. PIC compañeros, however, were not explicitly trying to keep
women out like ronderos in Bambamarca had attempted during the minister’s visit. Still, as
“progressive” as Wilmer was, he drew the line on feminist and queer politics. Talk about
“género” was apparently a gateway to other dangerous ideas.

Planning the Hugo Blanco School, 2019

When I returned to Celendín in June of 2019, I coincided with a PIC planning meeting
for the next Hugo Blanco school. Compared to past PIC meetings I had attended, this one
revealed women’s commanding presence and occupation of the organizing space at PIC. Also,
the meeting began with only five members, and women outnumbered men. This latter fact
surprised me as I was used to being at meetings overwhelmingly attended by compañeros. In the
past, José would have organized and run these meetings as director of the Platform, but he had
gradually begun drawing back and letting other members take the lead. Julieta was taking notes
and drew a list of people to be invited to attend the school. She directed compañero Carlos to add
himself to the whatsapp group chat José had created for planning this school. Pilar and Daniel
began calling compañerxs to invite them. Daniel called Wilmer to ask him where he was and to
tell him that they were meeting right now and he should join them. After getting the calls going,
the defensorxs turned toward debating the title and theme for the school. Someone suggested that
a woman be chosen as the honored person. The conversation went back and forth about whether
to choose a living defensora, the figure of the “defensora,” or a renowned woman from Celendín.

Then, the conversation turned toward the school’s theme. A charged discussion on
machismo and gender ensued. Daniel decided to call a PDTG staff member who had kept the
accords from the last school to inquire about the suggested themes for the upcoming school.
Daniel was convinced that machismo had been one of the suggested themes. Wilmer, who had arrived by this point, spurned even discussing the possibility of machismo and gender as themes. Wilmer stated that there were more important topics to focus a school on, moreover, he reiterated (as he had expressed two years before), that those themes had probably been brought up by the Lima-based NGOs: “vienen y meten sus temas” ([they] come and put in their topics). He continually asked who had suggested those topics. By now, the discussion was practically between Daniel and Wilmer and none of the compañeras were intervening. They observed the two men debate the merits of having gender and machismo as the themes for the next school.

Daniel responded: “No, no han sido ellas [las ONGs], si no las compañeras mismas que han pedido el tema. Las compañeras de Bambamarca lo han pedido.” Wilmer later asked again: “¿Quién lo ha pedido? Hay cosas más importantes como la educación, la religión.” (Who asked for it? There are more important things [topics] like education, religion.) Earlier in the conversation, Wilmer had said something to the extent that having such a conversation “no se puede tener” (it cannot be had). Daniel replied that it was possible to discuss these topics at a school. Wilmer then clarified that what he had meant was that it could not be solved in one evening because such a conversation would go on endlessly. Therefore, it was not worth having it at the school—it would not get anywhere.

Their debate, however, demonstrates the complexities of compañeros’ sensibilities to sexism and gendered relations. At one point in the conversation, compañeros Wilmer and Carlos made fun of Daniel by feminizing him, suggesting he was gay: “está más del otro campo” ([he’s] more with the other team). Daniel grew frustrated, not at the jokes, but at the fact that his

9 “No, no, it hasn’t been them [the NGOs], but the compañeras themselves who have asked for it. The compañeras from Bambamarca.”
compañeros did not realize how they were perpetuating machismo. Daniel tried to explain to them that he, as a man, could be just as invested in those topics as their compañeras. He supported these being the topics for the school. For Daniel, this was clearly not a matter of (his own) sexuality. It seemed like everyone was against Daniel—even some of the compañeras had laughed at Carlos’s jokes. I had remained quiet, neither laughing nor contributing, and suppressing the urge to interject. The feminist in me wanted to say my piece on gender. Finally, unable hold back any longer as I watched Daniel drift away as if on a small raft in hostile waters, I said that I supported Daniel and agreed with what he was saying. From personal experience, I knew the value of having allies in these kinds of debates.

Daniel, a middle-aged Shilico, was probably the oldest of the compañerxs at the meeting that night. He had also been regularly attending the trainings and encuentros held by the Lima-based NGOs in Lima and other cities across the country. Indeed, when Claudia, a PDTG member, was on a trip to Celendín, she had recommended that I talk to Daniel about his experience at a masculinities workshop he had attended in Lima. The workshop Claudia was referring to had been organized by the Spain-funded grant that supported the women’s organization and some of PIC’s work. Apparently, the workshop had been transformative for Daniel, instilling a new awareness about how his masculinity informed his relation to women. At this school planning meeting, Daniel tried to rationalize this emerging perspective to his compañeros. He implored that they listen to him: he, too, used to say and make similar jokes about homosexuality, but the trainings and reflection had slowly led him to realize the kind of violence he had been inflicting on others. Daniel had responded to Wilmer and Carlos’s taunts with: “yo estoy seguro en mi sexualidad” (I am confident in my sexuality). Had Daniel felt shamed by the taunts, he might not have maintained his position as he did. I made a mental note
of how significant it was that it was Daniel, a compañero, and not a compañera, who was doing
the work of concientización (bringing awareness) about gender. The discussion nevertheless
proved how much work still needed to be done to make compañeros conscious of the subtler
workings of gendered relations. Daniel proved that trainings were making an impact; these topics
were being understood, digested, and appropriated by some, but not all defensores. Indeed,
Wilmer had rebutted Daniel’s points declaring, “aquí en Celendín, en el campo, a la gente no le
interesa esas cosas” (here in Celendín, in the countryside, people are not interested in those
topics).

Wilmer’s emphasis that those topics were relevant to Lima, but not to Celendín,
demonstrated the deep-seatedness of heteronormative values in provincial Cajamarca, and how
insidious patriarchal ideologies are. Wilmer was convinced he was a conscious luchador.
Moreover, he was enacting the same kind of oppressive marginalization that men in Latin
America’s leftist revolutions (see Stephen 1997) and the US black power movement (see
Combahee River Collective 1981) enacted when women proposed including gender issues in the
movements. Men continue to feel threatened by the possibility of merely taking gender into
account. Pilar finally interjected to say that perhaps they (luchadorxs from Celendín and the city)
do understand these topics, but people from the campo would not. Pilar asserted that these topics
were relevant to her, as a Shilica, and that she understood them. Moreover, Pilar disagreed with
Wilmer’s assessment on the capacity of compañeros to comprehend the gendered relations of
power.

Pilar and Wilmer’s disagreement, and the larger debate about the themes, revealed the
power contention ignited by the presence of a feminist consciousness in the struggle. In 2017, I
sat in a meeting in Celendín between NGO staff and the compañeras from the women’s
organization where compañeras explained that women were still inhibited from actively participating in the mixed-gender PIC meetings. Lizbet had taken the helm of responding from the compañeras’ side. She told the NGO members that compañeras often do not have “confianza” (trust) to express themselves at PIC meetings. Lizbet reinforced their need to have a space for themselves, where compañeras would feel free to express themselves. This was because PIC operated as a masculine space where compañeros had de facto privilege of participation afforded by a historical societal context that endorsed men’s public roles and discouraged women’s. Lizbet also mentioned that although men made up the majority within the PIC, women have been the first ones to take action, yet women’s initiative goes unrecognized. Even though the school planning meeting I witnessed in 2019 was a relatively small meeting, women’s participation in the direction and coordination of the meeting was a departure from the meetings I had attended in 2017. So, compañeras’ beingness, their “corporalidad” (Lindón 2012), was discursively and practically challenging the masculinity of PIC space through their advocacy for prioritizing gender.

As the discussion at the planning meeting continued, Pilar suggested that different language be used to talk about these themes at the school. Daniel built on Pilar’s idea, noting that this was the reason the term “masculinidades” (masculinities) had been dropped in favor of “machismo” at réplicas (replicated workshops). Local organizations and PIC had come to the following agreement with Lima-based NGOs: opting for language that had more resonance with the rural base of the struggle. Pilar reiterated that people would reject or quit listening to what was being discussed at the workshops if they used unfamiliar conceptual or abstracted terms. Pilar’s recommendation evinced a clarity of vision about how to effectively further dialogues on gendered subordination without alienating luchadorxs.
At the same time, Pilar also proved that luchadoras’ articulation with feminist NGOs includes the negotiation of the terms (literally and figuratively) of their mutual collaboration. These negotiations reveal defensoras’ autonomous feminist politics. This is a significant point because, whether or not defensoras call themselves feminists, they enact (a plural) feminist political praxis arising from their positionality. In effect, the compañeras were not passive recipients to the political discourses from the urban institutional feminism practiced by some of the NGOs in Lima. This point was driven home when Pilar added, to clarify her recommendation about language, that the women’s organization is only against abortion, but she had nothing against people who identified as gay. Gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights were not necessarily separate, or unconnected, ideas to Pilar and this is partly why she made this comment in a discussion about gender. Importantly for our discussion, Pilar’s remark signaled that she, and the organization, rejected the Lima-based abortion rights campaign as part of their ecoterritorial defense.

In fact, abortion is a key reference for detailing the complexity of compañeras’ feminist politics. Defensoras’ perspective on abortion aligns with the deep roots of Christianity in the province. When I heard compañeras refer to abortion, or pregnancy, it was usually couched in the God-laden language. “Los hijos una bendición de Dios” (Children are God’s blessing), “Dios da la vida” (God gives life) were expressions that dotted these conversations. Moreover, this register also emerged in defensoras’ conceptualization of the struggle. The government and corporations were rebuked for destroying what “God created.” Indeed, some defensorxs

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10 Pilar’s point about abortion reflected one of the contentious issues arising from defensoras’ articulation with the feminist and human rights NGOs from Lima. DEMUS is transparent in its support of women’s right to abortions. However, DEMUS has encountered challenges in conveying this position and training women in abortion rights discourses in Cajamarca. By 2019, compañeras from Celendín and DEMUS had agreed to disagree. DEMUS knew that its entry would be shut in Celendín if they continued to push this campaign. The women’s organization made it clear that they welcomed workshops on other topics – including gender rights and violence against women – but abortion became a taboo topic.
challenged the mine’s proposal to replace the region’s alpine lakes with reservoirs by saying that what was “man-made” could never rival God’s creation. Christianity emerged as a source of moral justification for their struggle. Moreover, the evident overlap of Pachamama-anchored understandings and Christian discourses in defense of the body territory indexed the religious-ontological syncretism generated by the weight of centuries of colonial and post-colonial influences.

The entrance of evangelical Christian denominations in the region has added further complexity to compañeras’ perspectives. Catholicism has been the dominant religion in Peru since Spanish colonialism, but it is now increasingly common to hear about a variety of non-Catholic Christian groups establishing new parishes and churches. Julieta is one luchadora who belongs to an evangelical church in town. I knew Julieta did not support the legalization of abortion, and she had remained mostly quiet during the heat of the debate between Wilmer and Daniel. I observed that the discussion was probably making Julieta uncomfortable. She disengaged from the conversation, seeming to pretend it was not happening. Julieta had continued drafting the list of contacts and going over other items while the two compañeros debated the merits of the themes. Julieta was not enjoying the open confrontation between the two positions and, the few times she spoke up, she suggested that they drop both themes (machismo and gender). She thought they should just stick to the environment and territory.

Though apparently coinciding with Wilmer, Julieta’s suggestion reveals what, to my view, was yet another contradiction. One that linked ecoterritorial defense with a religiously conservative perspective on gender tied to Christianity. From conversations with Julieta in the time I lived in Celendín in 2017, I knew her reticence about including gender stemmed from
religious doctrine. While Julieta does not share the right-wing liberal economics of right-wing Christian fundamentalist politics, she sees gender problematically. Subscribing to the perspective that gender is an “ideology,” Julieta takes a heteronormative hegemonic approach that reinforces gender binaries and heterosexuality. And adding further nuance to the terrain of struggle, Wilmer himself did not outright dismiss gender violence as a state mechanism of control. He felt that gender by itself (and perhaps even as a form of political violence) was less important than other matters, but not for religious reasons. Julieta’s separation of gender violence and rights from their ecoterritorial struggle, though disagreeing with my proposition of a *cuerpo territorio* analytical framework, does not invalidate the feminist praxis of defensoras. Moreover, Julieta’s perspective is also not representative of the entire organization, as we saw from Pilar’s intervention. This plurality is rather part and parcel of the heterogeneous quality of defensoras’ politicization.

Other defensoras, like Pilar and Lizbet, were open to discussing gender and sexuality. Pilar made space for the inclusion of gender- and sexually-queer luchadorxs, and their experiences, in the struggle. Likewise, Lizbet expressed an openness about sexual diversity. Lizbet once recounted how shocked Karen had been at a DEMUS meeting in Lima when two women kissed. Lizbet laughed when she narrated the story, explaining to me that “en Lima todo se ve” (In Lima [one] sees all kinds of things). Karen and compañeras from “el campo” (the countryside) are not used to seeing things like that—that is, public displays of queer affection—Lizbet concluded. One of her close friends in Lima, Lizbet told me on that occasion, was a gay hairdresser. These moments brought to the fore the diversity of values held by defensoras. They

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11 The heteronormative right-wing conservatism of Evangelical fundamentalisms in Latin America has been one of the principle forces behind the “gender ideology” movement.
also show the complexity in solidarity work and how luchadorxs negotiate their particular beliefs with the collective goals of the struggle.

I joined the debate again, noting that the concept of gender was distinct from supporting abortion rights. I suggested that those topics could exist as separate conversations. Moreover, I told them what I thought gender implied (a concept predicated on structural mechanisms of inequality between men and women) and that I thought gender did pertain to ecoterritorial defense. I mentioned the extra burdens laid on women, such as when they have to wake up earlier than men to get the household ready before participating in mobilizations.

The compañeros, however, still struggled to make sense of how to include gender and machismo at the school. Ironically, they perpetuated the violence of the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2007) even while trying to make space for a discussion on gender. Wilmer joined back in the conversation after Pilar to tell everyone that he knew a gay person; a colleague at the school where he works. Wilmer reaffirmed that he had no issue with homosexuality, and that he thought his gay acquaintances live “felizmente” (happily) in Celendín. A compañero then proposed inviting a gay friend to “talk” about the topic from first-hand experience. Wilmer enthusiastically supported this idea. He thought people would be more apt to listen if it came from someone who knew the topic “de fondo” (in depth). Eventually, everyone agreed to hold off on a decision about gender and machismo until the final planning meeting, the night before the school. Then, they would discuss with their NGO collaborators whether to drop those themes.

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This first part of the chapter delineated the masculinized terrain of struggle that luchadorxs navigate. Karen’s presentation at the Escuela Hugo Blanco highlighted the forms of machismo defensoras confront when they assert themselves as political actors. The debate at the planning meeting in 2019 demonstrated the contested spaces generated when defensoras insert themselves in conversations defining ecoterritorial defense in Cajamarca. To be sure, while the conversation at the planning meeting revolved around gender and sexism, the form of the discussion gestured toward the fissures where women’s agency breaches wider openings.

Defensoras’ feminist praxis has the potential to effectively subvert established local relations of power between men and women. Indeed, Pilar was able to affirm her differing point of view against a dominant masculine perspective. The training opportunities provided by NGOs from Lima (those scorned by Wilmer) foster defensoras’ articulation with a feminist politics that endorses the expression and assertion of their political identities in spite of machismo. This articulation, however, has not been not a uni-directional exchange where defensoras uncritically adopt feminist theoretical and political positions. Instead, defensoras’ ecoterritorial defense integrates the paradigms that already inform their diverse social identities, negotiating these with the gendered awareness that NGOs like DEMUS promote. These processes allow us to see how the undoing and unlearning of oppressive ideologies is variable, creating an uneven field of consciousness in the struggle.
“¿Amiga, me acompañas a revisar mi cuenta?” (Friend, would you come with me to check my bank statement?) During our walks, I sometimes accompanied Julieta and her young son, Marcos, to check her Banco de la Nación checking account. Julieta periodically inspected the account to see if her ex-boyfriend and father of her child had deposited his monthly contribution for their son’s care. It was nearly the middle of the month and her ex-boyfriend still had not made the deposit. “A veces no reviso la cuenta hasta después del inicio de mes para que no me de cólera si no ha depositado.” (Sometimes I don’t check the account until after the beginning of the month to avoid becoming upset if he hasn’t deposited.) This time was no different. Julieta’s ex-boyfriend had not deposited the one hundred twenty soles he had begrudgingly agreed to.

At that time, Julieta had not filed a formal child support claim against her ex-boyfriend because he continuously pressured her to not claim it. Julieta’s ex-boyfriend lived with a successful market vendor who appeared to object to him providing any support for Marcos. Although the ex-boyfriend worked the Celendín-Cajamarca taxi route on a car that was, de facto, his own, he financially depended on his current partner, the market vendor. Therefore, he implored Julieta to allow him to support Marcos monthly with one hundred twenty soles, instead of two hundred, the minimum child support the state required. Marcos’s father had beseeched Julieta to agree to the one hundred twenty because he alleged that anything more would upset his partner. Julieta relented and accepted one hundred twenty, an amount that was not enough for Marcos’s needs, Julieta commented every so often, but nonetheless was better than nothing.
In fact, Julieta did not like calling her ex-boyfriend to ask him to deposit the money. “Me incomoda pedirle dinero. Si le pido por más plata empieza a quejarse y decirme cosas.” (It makes me uncomfortable to ask him for money. If I ask him for more money he starts complaining and telling me things.) On the day that I recorded Julieta’s political narrative, I also asked her if she was on friendly terms with Marcos’s father. She replied: “Tengo que llevar la fiesta en paz por Marcos, porque así [su papá] da su apoyo. Como me gustaría tener un buen trabajo que me cubriera mis gastos y los de Marcos para no tener que pedirle nada. No necesitaría depender de él ni hablar[le] jamás.” (I have to keep the peace for Marcos, because that way [his father] will give support. How I’d like to have a really good job that would cover my expenses and Marcos’s so that I would no longer need to ask him for anything, I wouldn’t depend on him or talk to him again.)

This second part of chapter three deals with the kind of autonomy that emerged as a function of defensoras’ political identities. I explore the ambiguities, frustrations, challenges of politicization for my collaborators: defensoras embedded in fields of power shaped by heteronormative social orders. Part one sketched the contours of the masculinized terrain of struggle in which defensoras come to an ecoterritorial and gendered consciousness. In this part, I gesture toward how that gendered consciousness speaks of a feminism of the Global South, or, more specifically, an Andean feminism, a defensora feminism. These labels are less important than the transgressive nature of my collaborators’ emerging praxis. And the labels are, in the end, mine, for my collaborators scarcely ever called themselves feminists. However, feminism is “good enough” language for articulating their politicization to a global north audience.

Stable income was a concern for single, unemployed compañeras like Julieta. For married or single women who had jobs or received pensions, livelihood concerns were present, but
expressed in a different way. In conversations with the latter group of defensoras, income did not appear as a topic of conversation in the same manner as with my collaborators with less financial stability. Often, with employed compañeras, or those with regular income, our conversations centered on the general ways in which the Conga conflict had affected Celendín’s economy, how mining was disrupting and generating new economic channels, and how the loss of local headwaters would devastate Celendín. This is not to say that single parents and unemployed defensoras did not worry about their livelihoods in the broad terms defined by the threat of large-scale extractive projects. They understood this just as well as other defensoras. Rather, it is that the focus of daily concerns shifts according to the varied socioeconomic conditions experienced by each defensora. Admittedly, the kind of conversations I had with single or married defensoras was influenced by the fact that my closest collaborators were precisely those luchadoras who did not have conjugal ties and whose absence of employment obligations opened their daily routines to my presence. It might also have had to do with a proximity in age which gravitated me toward younger compañeras like Lizbet, Julieta, and Pilar. Or maybe it was their cute kids. In all likelihood, it was all of these factors combined. Thus, I spent less time with married defensoras. When I did see them, it was usually limited to a context related to the organization or the struggle. This naturally predisposed the kind of conversations we would initiate as they often ended up having to do with the reason for our meeting (planning a vigil, a workshop, or taking a walk with other compañeras as self-care within the struggle).

Here in part two, the complications that arise from defensoras’ diverse positionalities as women in a machista world and how they live personal struggles within la lucha in order to maintain their ecoterritorial commitments, come to life. For this reason, I focus on the political economy of their politicization. From my perspective, my collaborators lead lives that channel
Amara Fadela’s (2004) words: *ni putas ni sumisas* (neither whores nor submissive). Their political identities troubled the expectations of patriarchal and heteronormative provincial Peru. To be sure, one of my central arguments in the discussion that follows is this: heterosexual singleness enabled the expansion of Cajamarcan women’s politics. Recall that Julieta’s concern was not to quit being single and have her ex-boyfriend back, but not to depend on his meager contribution any longer. Julieta desired the autonomy that comes from financial independence.

**Economic Precarity and Family**

Precariousness, which affected all of the defensorxs, is illustrated in the case of Julieta, who holds a bachelor’s degree in environmental engineering but could not find work in Celendín. When I had asked her why this was, if there were simply no jobs in Celendín in her field, she said that there were a few, but that these were mostly political party-appointed positions. Julieta did not count on those jobs because members of the coalitional activist organization *Plataforma Interinstitucional de Celendín* (PIC) were out of favor with the current municipal government. Once, she told me that she had been waiting to hear from a friend in the municipality who promised to get her a job once he started his new job there; however, he had not done anything in the time he had been there. She remarked that she would only ask him

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12 Fadela’s slogan, “ni putes ni soumises,” which grew into the feminist movement in France in the early 2000s, has been adopted in Latin America. It is particularly significant that Fadela’s feminism comes from a Global South space within the Global North. She is a French-Algerian Muslim woman who grew up in the banlieues of Clermont-Ferrand. Hers is a decolonizing feminism that opens up our understanding of feminism from a monocle to a kaleidoscopic lens.

13 From 2015 to 2018, Jorge “Coco” Luis Urquía Sánchez was mayor of Celendín. Urquía Sánchez was elected on the Movimiento de Afirmación Social (MAS) ticket. However, while the MAS and PIC had worked together at the start of the anti-Conga conflict, political disagreements caused a rupture between the two groups. As a MAS candidate, Coco was expected to uphold public interests in keeping the mining out of the province. However, my collaborators regularly pointed out that Coco had sold out and shifted his position on mining—now welcoming certain projects. Moreover, my collaborators, who were predominantly PIC members, noted that Coco only gave government positions to MAS supporters, effectively excluding qualified candidates unaffiliated with MAS. The mayor was exercising nepotism with regard to these job appointments.
about employment if she ran into him. She was not going to hassle him about the job since it looked like it was not going to happen.

Most unmarried defensoras ended up with temporary or informal work. For instance, Julieta primarily sought temporary work through the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática–INEI (National Information Technology and Statistics Institute), a central state agency within the National Statistics System. INEI frequently posted job openings for test proctors, surveying personnel, data analysts, and other positions with on-the-ground job functions. Julieta nevertheless favored these temporary positions because Marcos, her son, was still a toddler and she continues to be his primary caretaker. Sometimes, Julieta borrowed my laptop to apply to jobs. As I sat with her, watching her browse through the lengthy list of openings, she would narrate which positions were feasible as opposed to the jobs she might like, but would not work out because her familial responsibilities impeded her from committing the time for training. Julieta localized her search to the Cajamarca Region, which greatly shortened the list of employment possibilities. While Julieta might have been an eligible candidate for jobs in other regions, she could not count on traveling with Marcos and finding childcare at a place where she did not have family support.

In addition to considering the needs of her dependent child while searching for a job, Julieta was also preoccupied by the needs of her family, as well as her desire to live close to her natal family. In this struggle, Julieta was not unique among defensoras. Whenever I caught up with Julieta, I usually asked about her father’s chifa (Peruvian-Chinese fusion) restaurant. When I first arrived at Celendin in early 2017, Julieta’s father, Alfredo, was working as a chef at a local restaurant, but he was starting to transition to running his own restaurant. Alfredo had saved enough money to rent a large space near the plaza where another restaurant had been located.
However, the need for a regular source of income meant that Alfredo kept his day job as chef and only opened the *chifa* at night. Julieta helped at the *chifa* by acting as a one-person hostess, server, and sous chef. Looking through the government employment database was a process of casting a large net, and Julieta would express consternation about the possibility of being placed far from C elendín where she would not be able to help her father.

The *chifa* restaurant represented one opportunity for work, if the business were to pick up and provide enough revenue for stable salaries—for both Alfredo and Julieta. Were the restaurant to take off, Julieta would have quit looking for jobs elsewhere. Yet, the business was barely breaking even. With prospects for the *chifa’s* success looking ominous, Julieta lamented their luck on most occasions I asked about it. Thus, even the possibility of income from a formal small business was highly risky if one did not have enough resources to fully equip the business and run it full-time with a few months’ worth of financial cushion.

One way or another, our conversations always ended up on the subject of income and work and family responsibility. Although the restaurant would sporadically have good nights, most often Julieta would respond to me that the business was doing “mas o menos” (so-so), and that the locale owner was threatening to push them out. “No sé como vamos a hacer. No tenemos para pagar más de cuatrocientos soles al mes” (I’m not sure what we’ll do. We don’t make enough to pay more than four hundred soles per month.) Because of this, Julieta and Alfredo were frequently looking for other locations for the restaurant. So, part of the constant struggle was this permanent search for economic stability.
Jobs and Intimacy

Outside of consanguineal kin, affinal kin, or a lack thereof, also affects and is affected by a defensora’s economic conditions. More specifically, employment and conjugality are interwoven in an economic web that situates single, unemployed mothers in a more structurally-vulnerable economic position than their married peers. That a typical source of stable income for my collaborators came from a husband or partner’s job meant reliance on a partner’s income for economic security. Hence, for defensoras who are mothers and have no spouse or partner, being single is compounded by labor precarity. Being married, widowed, single, un/employed, or an entrepreneur meant that supporting themselves and their families looked different for each defensora. Although women’s lives consist of varying combinations of these factors, economic (in)security ended up being simultaneously freeing and constraining of defensoras’ politicization.

The first time I met Aída, Lizbet remarked that Aída would do more (read participate) within the organization if Aída’s husband, Maximiliano, “no la celara tanto” (did not act so jealously over her). Aída and Maximiliano have three children; the oldest of whom studies outside of Celendín. Maximiliano is a teacher and provides the largest part of their household income; however, they also have a plot of land in the outskirts of Celendín, where they grow crops and keep a beehive. The farm is tended primarily by Aída, who also manages household chores and childcare responsibilities in their home. The three of us—Aída, Lizbet, and I—sat in Lizbet’s kitchen as I asked Aída about her involvement in the struggle. Aída had participated in the anti-Conga movement early on, and she had joined the women’s organization when it was established. In Aída’s presence, Lizbet quickly pointed out that Maximiliano was somewhat of a machista, “pero por lo menos no lo esconde como los otros” (but at least he does not hide it like the others), Lizbet quipped. According to Lizbet, other men in the PIC might talk about and
acknowledge gender violence, but they had nothing to show for this awareness in their actions.
In Lizbet’s mind, Maximiliano expressed his machismo directly. He limited Aída’s attendance at
events held outside Celendín. In the past, he also attended the women’s organizational meetings,
sitting quietly off to one side while Aída participated with her compañeras.

Lizbet continued telling me about Maximiliano as we sipped our coffee in her kitchen.
Lizbet noted that he is “muy respetuoso” (very respectful) at their meetings, seldomly
intervening even if Lizbet will sometimes debate with him on a topic under discussion.
Displaying what seemed to me to be a kind of sympathy toward Maximiliano, Lizbet separated
his behavior from other forms of misogyny. In explaining Maximiliano’s behavior as machismo
based on overprotection (“celar”) in contrast to other machista men, who abuse their wives or
pretend to have awareness of unequal gender relations, Lizbet appeared to excuse the behavior
because it benefitted Aída’s participation in the struggle. Lizbet’s assessment of his behavior
provides insight on the local patterns of patriarchalized power modalities. Cast as
“overprotection” this abusive form of control was palatable because it upheld the veneer of
caring spouse. I grew up with similar forms of machismo—a Latin Americanized sexism
suppurating with paternalism toward women where spaces outside the confines of the domestic
sphere hold all manner of dangers from which women need to be protected. The maintenance of
a woman’s safety is passed from the father to the husband once a woman marries, without
question as to a woman’s ability to provide her own safety. Of course, other dangers abound
which could bring out “celos” (jealousy) such as the risk of a wife going out to meet a lover.

Lizbet’s logic implied that machismo was tolerable if it allowed a defensora to participate
in movement activities. Conjugalcy facilitated men’s exercise of control over their partners’
odies, practically determining defensoras’ existence in time and space. In response to Lizbet’s
judgment about Maximiliano, Aída remarked that she “invites” her husband to organizational meetings. Lizbet retorted that Aída invites him because Aída knows Maximiliano will attend anyway. And, in fact, when Aída arrived that evening at Lizbet’s place, she mentioned being able to visit Lizbet because Maximiliano was at a teacher’s meeting.

Conjugality also facilitated financial stability. The heteronormative patriarchal system demands that defensoras barter one thing for another: their independence for economic security. These heteropatriarchal structures were troubled by single women who exercised a greater degree of interpersonal autonomy. However, it was clear that even if the mode of their constraints shifted from conjugal to economic, the source remained the same: capitalist heteropatriarchy. Singleness was transgressive, not because heterosexuality was rejected, but because heteronormative social structures were undermined. Being single does not mean being singular, individualist, or alone; it refers to being single in relation to heterosexualist coupling. Single mothers came to rely more on communal networks of support, often from their kin groups. We might say not that they are single, but that they went from coupled to communal. Nonetheless, for the sake of this discussion, I stick to “single” as a qualifier because I discuss defensoras’ lives in relation to conjugality. Especially given that they live under the oppression of these structures.

Envisioning Alternatives to Capitalist Patriarchy

Before discussing the significance of potential sources of autonomous income for luchadoras, I compare the parental and conjugal situations affecting my collaborator’s livelihood circumstances. My closest collaborators in Celendín were, thus, single mothers. Pilar, Lizbet, and Julieta all have children under ten years old. Lizbet also has a teenage daughter who lived in
Lima with her father, but is now attending the National University at Cajamarca. Lizbet’s three-year-old son was born from a long-term relationship she maintained with her son’s father throughout the Conga conflict. This relationship ended just after their son’s birth. Pilar’s eldest child is still in elementary school, and Pilar was expecting her second child when we first met. Julieta’s son was barely walking when I arrived in Celendín. Julieta and Lizbet had both become pregnant through long-term relationships with their children’s fathers. While Pilar’s first child was born out of a brief, turbulent relationship, Pilar’s second child is from a committed relationship with a man she had met when she lived in Lima in 2016. These defensoras, like others in similar situations, presently find themselves with sole parental duty, even if they had been in past committed relationships with their children’s fathers.

About half the women that were participating in Celendín’s women’s organization, however, had spouses. Sra. Consuelo was married to Roberto, and they have two adult children. Sra. Doris is a widow who worked as a teacher until retirement, and whose husband had also been a teacher. Sra. Doris has several children, including one daughter, Silvia, who lives in town and had once been a member of the defensoras’ organization. Among the organization’s active members without children is Elena, who is married to a schoolteacher, a compañero who is also in the struggle and a member of PIC. Elena is around Julieta and Pilar’s age, and she supplements her husband’s income by weaving the straw base for the typical Shilica/o hats manufactured in the province. A skilled artisan, Elena often works late into the night completing orders for her aunt, the intermediary for the commercial businesses selling the finished hats. Another central, if exceptional, defensora was sister Beatriz, a Catholic nun who had been living in Celendín for close to a decade and had participated in the anti-Conga conflict from the
beginning. Her occupation as a service-oriented nun both facilitated her commitment to the struggle and secured her livelihood.

Worries about finances also manifested in my collaborator’s dreams for careers or business opportunities. While I lived in Celendín, I learned about various entrepreneurial projects Lizbet had in mind. As Lizbet had no formal employment, she received some combination of assistance from a brother and her mother to pay for the quarters she had rented in the second floor of a house in Celendín. One of her biggest projects required taking a bank credit to build a guest house and restaurant on her mother’s property in a district near Celendín. Lizbet envisioned running the business as a recreational center. On other occasions, Lizbet would talk about her desire to obtain a law degree to help women suffering in abusive relationships and victims of domestic violence. Lizbet’s plan was to take evening or weekend classes, allowing her to work during the rest of the week. Lizbet is clearly a visionary: a woman of keen business acumen. When a friend of Lizbet offered to invest in a restaurant with my family in New York, Lizbet mused to me what she might do if she had someone willing to invest capital in one of her projects. The last time I was in Celendín, in 2019, I had not heard if Lizbet had enrolled in a law program, but a mutual friend told me she was now living in Cajamarca with her daughter.

Most of Lizbet’s ideas for formalized work, however, emerged in relation to the women’s organization. In the past, the PIC had contemplated creating a co-op, but this idea was eventually dropped. Lizbet thought a co-op might succeed exclusively as a women’s project because the compañeros never seemed to representar (represent) women’s interests. She concluded that their vision was different from women’s. Lizbet was alluding to two distinct processes by which men

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14 Sister Beatriz was re-assigned to another city in late 2017. I did not see her again after I moved back to Cajamarca in the middle of the year.
dominated the space of the struggle, or at least the organizing space of the PIC. First, that Lizbet puts men in a position to represent women suggests that women themselves are not vocalizing their interests. Compañeros, who are more at ease occupying the shared (mixed gender) PIC space, speak up and potentially have spoken for the luchadoras in past situations. Second, whether or not men are aware of their compañeras’ interests, they do not share these, instead presenting their own. The second contention indicates that men and women conceptualize their work in the struggle differently. In a hypothetical case where women might be contributing and saying as much as men, both groups might nonetheless have distinct goals. With the co-op, it seemed that men supported the project in a manner that conflicted with how women understood the project to be most beneficial to their situation.

I most often heard about the differentiated frameworks between men and women from compañeras who tied their view of the struggle to their social roles. This difference boils down to what Karen, the Bambamarca rondera, said at her Hugo Blanco school presentation: in the defense of our territories “quién es la persona que más sufre? La mujer. Porque la mujer estamos [sic] más en casa o estamos más [en] contacto con el agua.”15 Compañeras consistently framed the struggle from the embodied experience of being the caretakers in their households. This is a socially-designated domestic role for women. Therefore, responsibility falls on them to ensure the family has the sustenance it needs. To be clear, defensoras do not reject this aspect of their role as wives and mothers. They incorporate this responsibility into their politicization—it becomes a foundational brick at the base of their ecoterritorial defense. The kind of feminist praxis that emerges from their defense thus embraces their ties to family, and to the geospatial territory that provides for their livelihood and caretaking roles. Nevertheless, defensoras

15 “Who is the person who suffers the most? The woman. Because women are at home more and we are in direct contact with water.”

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appropriate feminist politics to demand a transformation in the manner of power relations vis-à-vis men.

A Women’s Co-op

One innovative solution to luchadoras’ livelihood pressures was the development of a women’s co-op where they would sell handmade, artisanal products. Though I did not talk to compañeros about their views on a co-op, I understood that a co-op represented an important source of self-generated, autonomous revenue for women. It was something that would allow compañeras to be financially secure and independent, providing economic alternatives to mining in a place with few job opportunities. It would allow women the flexibility to continue dedicating the time they devoted to the struggle without having to worry about finding the next source of income. For many compañeros living in Celendín, employment was less of a concern. On the one hand, the compañeros leading PIC were receiving a small salary for living expenses through grants from the organizations in Lima. Indeed, PIC had an in-house legal counsel who received a modest, though regular salary. On the other hand, other Celedín-based defensores had full-time work as teachers or through other occupations. Compañeros were more prone to seeing the success of the struggle as a singular goal. Thus, the struggle came before other concerns; effectively compartmentalizing the politics of defense from other domains of life. Women, from their social positions, understood success as dependent on the integration of the various dimensions of their livelihoods. Defensoras did not have the privilege of disaggregating processes and goals in the struggle. My collaborators, more often than compañeros, endured the stress of being pulled in opposite directions: securing their families’ material needs or participating in the struggle.
A women-initiated co-op would align their need to provide for family dependents with economic alternatives to mining and the flexibility of leading lives that are always already political. Figuring that their organization might be able to secure funds from one of their supporting organizations in Lima, Lizbet envisioned establishing a storefront shop where each defensora might sell hand-made products. Indeed, Lizbet had mentioned in several conversations that she continuously tried to encourage the creation of spaces for compañeras to bring and sell their products on their travels to workshops, conferences, or trainings held at other cities. Though the idea of taking artisanal hand-crafted products sometimes took hold and women were able to sell items on their trips, the practice was not established and seemed to occur mostly through the encouragement and coordination of Lizbet. Getting such a project initiated and running with enough efficiency to provide stable income for the compañeras would take time and resources. At some point in 2018, my collaborators in Celendín finally achieved this. Through funding from PDTG and allied organizations, the women’s organization received seed money to buy equipment for making jams. Women used locally-sourced ingredients to make jam at the new PIC locale. Indeed, the PIC and the women’s organization agreed that one room in the new locale would serve exclusively as the headquarters for the women’s co-op. During my visit in 2019, I learned that defensoras were also planning to expand their product line to include handmade soap. So far, the jam sales allowed women to cover the costs of production with some left-over revenue to go to the organization and some for the commission of compañeras’ sales. Though running the co-op was not without challenges, the women remained optimistic about the possibilities for growth.

For compañeras, economic and labor precarity compounds the stress of confronting large extractive projects. Livelihood is re-defined by integrating the preservation of a geospatial
territory that continues to provide the means to take care of their families (through unpolluted agricultural production and safe water sources) and financial security. The politics of daily life for single and unemployed defensoras allows for freedom of mobility, an emancipation from the interpersonal oppressiveness of heteronormative conjugal structures. In an economic sense, heteronormative structures are ironically protective, rather than oppressive, because they provide material security for the needs of the household. Yet the autonomy of personhood that singleness enables, permits a deeper development of a gendered political consciousness through attendance at workshops and trainings. As part and parcel of their ecoterritorial defense, a gendered consciousness informed by the feminist politics of Lima-based NGOs effectively constructs identities empowered to be defensoras in socially-transgressive ways. Significantly, the emancipatory potential of being “single” also exposes defensoras to economic hardships, and defensoras must negotiate the autonomy of being free of heteropatriarchal coupling with their commitments to the struggle, as is demonstrated through the development of a women’s co-op. In the next section, I narrativize two connected events that occurred over a forty-eight hour period to exemplify the time and energy investments my collaborators make as part of their political commitment to the struggle.
Keeping Up with Pilar

We lit the cerro (mountain) yesterday. Actually, we did not technically ignite it. We illuminated one of the slopes facing Celendín with candles that spelled “AMBIENTE SANO” (healthy environment). It was now Monday, the UN’s World Environment Day, and yesterday I had joined Pilar and her friends on an action in anticipation of day. The women’s organization was to hold a vigil with hot cocoa and bread this evening at the plaza to celebrate the day. Pilar had been actively involved in arranging both activities, but the illumination was under her complete command, and I had been present from start to finish as Pilar planned the illumination. In the past, Pilar had participated in a similar action in defense of the territory, so the illumination was not a new idea.

Pilar was four months pregnant when we hiked for close to an hour to the part of the cerro where we would place the candles. Pilar had not told her partner, who lived in New Jersey, what she was going to do that day. He would have gotten upset with her because he did not want her participating in any kind of organizing. He preferred that she stay home. Pilar’s restlessness had affected her pregnancy. She had a series of painful infections during the first and second trimesters that led to multiple unplanned trips to the health post. Her obstetrician recommended that she quit walking as much as she did because it was exacerbating her infections. Moreover, Pilar had been diagnosed with placenta previa. Pilar acknowledged that she needed to be careful, but she also believed in the urgency of the work required for the struggle. Both things could be dealt with simultaneously. It seemed to me that Pilar pushed herself to the limit, but the struggle to her is a matter of life and death. The struggle to survive was tied to saving the life of the territory. Pilar pursued her plan to illuminate the cerro with conviction. She told me we would go
slowly and take plenty of breaks to ease the hike. It was an arduous walk up the mountain, even for myself who was exercising regularly and not carrying a child in my womb.

That morning, we had met in front of Oscar’s cheese shop at eight. Oscar still had some things to attend to at the shop, but he would leave in a short while with his nephews and their friend. They would meet us at the agreed location. We brought some provisions from his shop and bought some fruit on the way to cerro’s path. When we finally made it to the right spot for the illumination, I found out that various groups bring candles and other materials to create illuminations for a variety of reasons; one of the most recent ones had been done on the anniversary of a local school. Often, these groups left stashes of plastic bottle strewn across the cerro’s slope for the next time they create an illumination. The bottles are fashioned like lanterns and used as candle holders, so that the flames are protected. The illumination took longer than we anticipated because we had fewer hands than expected for setting up. We ended up with two hundred ten “faroles” (lanterns) which only allowed us to spell “ambiente sano” instead of “cuidemos el medio ambiente” (let’s take care of the environment). We had to wait until sunset to begin lighting the candles even though we finished setting up the letters by the late afternoon. Despite our fears about losing track of the lanterns in the dark, we succeeded in lighting all the lanterns. Still, the growing darkness slowed us down considerably. Once we finished, we haphazardly made our way down the slope. We celebrated our achievement that night with dinner at Julieta’s chifa. The food seemed to warm my chilled bones, and that night I collapsed into my bed way past my usual bedtime, my body worn from the day’s events.

The next day, Pilar called me in the afternoon to join her in getting new receipts for the candles we had bought for the illumination. Apparently, the store owner had given us outdated receipts, which would not work for reimbursement from the NGOs that had contributed money.
for the action. We agreed to meet at the plaza at three, after she dropped off Victor at his dance
rehearsal at school. When I met her, Pilar was on the phone with Julieta. They were coordinating
the “perifoneo” (loudspeaker announcing) to advertise the vigil. 16 Julieta, who is on the shier
side, declined Pilar’s request to announce, but she agreed to give Pilar funds from the
organization’s budget for renting the loudspeaker equipment. Up to that point, I had not realized
that Pilar meant to do the perifoneo at that exact moment. She asked me if I would help her
announce. I was less than enthused about having my voice project across Celendín. Suddenly, I
became self-conscious about my non-Peruvian accent and being in some kind of spotlight I had
not anticipated. I acceded in spite of my apprehension. Neither Pilar nor I had scripts, so we
winged the announcements, repeating through the central and backstreets of Celendín some
version of “vigilia por el medio ambiente esta noche en la plaza” (vigil for the environment	onight at the plaza). The announcements were meant for bystanders on the street. Given the
time, the outdoors public ranged from schoolchildren to adults running errands. When our rental
was over, we dropped off the equipment and asked the mototaxi driver to drop us off at the
candle shop. The receipts still needed to be worked out. I remained with Pilar the rest of the
afternoon and evening, and I assisted her in setting up for the vigil.

Hustling Autonomy: Everyday Political Lives

The illumination and vigil stand out as examples of Pilar’s rhythm of compromise
(commitment). Pilar’s pace challenged me—I would often get to my room at nine or ten at night
exhausted from the day’s activities. Often, I found myself unable to say no to her because I knew

16 “Perifoneo” is a form of street announcing through the use of loudspeakers mounted on a vehicle. This could be a
pre-recorded message, or a livestream from another location. In Celendín, loudspeakers are mounted in “mototaxis”
(motorcycle carriage taxis similar to tuk-tuks) and announcers sit in the backseat speaking directly into a
microphone that projects the message.
she would be out there on her own, walking about town, regardless of whether she had help. Pilar became my co-worker and friend. And she had taken me under her wing. After Pilar decided to help me with my research, she brought me with her seemingly everywhere. She invited me to join her as she completed tasks and errands for the women’s organization or for the youth artivist organization she was a part of, Jóvenes Organizados de Celendín (JOC). And Pilar was always on the move. It seemed like Pilar was perpetually in the process of getting something done, and her pregnancy did not stand in the way of her commitment to the struggle.

Pilar was arguably the most active defensora in Celendín during my time there. And if it had not been for her generosity, my research in Celendín would have been greatly limited. However, Pilar and I got off to a rough start. We met in person in April. I had contacted her out of the blue when Lizbet gave me her cellphone number and reassured me that I could just call Pilar. The first couple of times Pilar answered (and a few times she did not pick up my call) she answered that Pilar was not around and asked if I wanted to leave a message. I resorted to sending text messages where I explained that I knew Lizbet, who had shared her cellphone number with me. Finally, I called again and asked for Pilar. Pilar answered, but repeated that Pilar was unavailable and pointedly asked me if I wanted to extract information for multinational corporations. I nervously replied “no,” fearing that she might cut me off for good. I explained my project over the phone and she finally admitted that she was indeed Pilar. She said she would think about my request for an interview. Pilar called me back and invited me to meet her near her house. When I arrived, she was there with a compañera from the youth group. “Lizbet a veces hace cosas como no se deben hacer” (Lizbet sometimes does not do things the way they are supposed to be done). I could not help but agree, feeling embarrassed about the entire situation and having potentially caused Pilar anxiety about a spy knowing her personal number. She
continued expressing her annoyance and disagreement with how Lizbet had proceeded, remarking that Lizbet should have reached out to her before sharing her cell phone with a stranger. I agreed once more and apologized for the miscommunication.

Pilar and her six-year old son, Victor, lived with Pilar’s mother, father, brother, and younger sister in a house they built with assistance from a state program that helps low-income Peruvians without property to purchase their own homes. Pilar’s mother and sister work at the municipal market selling produce. Her father collects metal scraps, recyclables, and occasionally does the odd job of transporting heavy cargo on a two-wheel pulled cart. When I met Pilar, she had returned from living in Lima, where she had met her current partner and the father of the baby she was expecting. Pilar’s partner had migrated to New Jersey years ago and annually returned to see his family during vacation. His family happened to be neighbors with the aunt Pilar had been living with in Lima, and they met through that connection. Upon his return to the U.S., Pilar traveled back to Celendín to spend the remainder of her pregnancy at home. Pilar’s partner financially supported her and her son during her pregnancy by sending periodic money remittances, which Pilar collected at a local general store.

Gradually, I began spending more time with Pilar, and we grew to depend on each other for support of our mutual work. Pilar facilitated the majority of the oral narratives I collected in Celendín. Even when helping me carry out my project goals, Pilar had an unabating drive. She fit everything into her day. Pilar is a mother and a luchadora. She is a daughter, a sister, a friend and a luchadora. Before and during her pregnancy, Pilar had been raising Victor as a single parent, with some support from her immediate family. Victor’s father was absent; although, Pilar knew his whereabouts and had begun a child support claim before I met her. I sometimes accompanied Pilar to the local branch of the juzgado (court) where child support cases are
handled. Pilar’s case against Victor’s father had been protracted over the course of a year. Numerous technical errors had led to repeated misfiling and the interruption of case proceedings. Pilar once mentioned a suspicion about one of the court’s civil servants not wanting Victor’s father to be charged with child support delinquency because he was related Victor’s father’s current girlfriend. On Pilar’s behalf, I stopped by the court offices in Cajamarca to ask if her paperwork had been submitted from Celendín. When I was unable to, she took traveled herself in combi to pursue of child support due to Victor.

During the most conflictive years of the struggle, when Pilar was traveling to the mining site, to other communities, or to Cajamarca to protest, her sister looked after Victor. Pilar’s sister also helped with Victor’s homework during his first few years of schooling. When I was in Celendín, I noticed that Pilar still counted on her sister to help Victor with homework if movement and organization activities required Pilar to stay out late into the evening (such as the day of the illumination). Pilar also counted on her partner’s income to help her cover Victor’s school expenses. Even though Pilar’s family could not assist her financially, they helped her by caring for Victor when she was out. They enabled her politicization and her work for the struggle. It was rather Pilar who supplemented the larger family’s income with the remittances she received from her partner. By contrast, Pilar’s partner was willing to extend monetary support for raising Victor, but he opposed Pilar’s participation in defense activities. Pilar frequently did not tell her partner what she was doing or where she was if she was out running errands for an action or mobilization. She knew he did not like it, but geographic distance allowed her to omit those details and to carefully balance both relationships—her relationship to the struggle and to her intimate partner. Thus, Pilar’s kin and conjugal relations permitted her to exercise command over her time and mobility that reflected a significant degree of autonomy.
Autonomy is a relative concept and also a relational process. Even for Aída, becoming a defensora entailed re-drawing more expansive boundaries in relation to her spouse. Her political identity afforded her the possibility of pursuing opportunities that she might have desired, but which may have otherwise been foreclosed by Maximiliano’s celos. Being in the women’s organization was a space for Aída to follow her interests and assert a politics in a masculine social scape where women are expected to remain in their domestic settings. In fact, I knew that Aída took advantage of her husband’s absence to attend meetings or run errands with the compañeras. Often, she would have one or both of her children with her. Aída’s commitment to the struggle propelled her to exercise agency over her time within the conditions of her conjugal situation. In comparison to Aída, Pilar was similarly taking advantage of her partner’s physical absence. She navigated the relationship by making the most of the temporality of living in different countries. Technologies of digital communication such as a cellphone vacillated in their benefits and dangers. Pilar’s partner could call her at any moment, and he periodically called her during breaks at work and when he was home. Yet the fickleness of cellular service in the province was an excuse for missed calls and unread text messages. Pilar did not want to lie to her partner, and knowing how he would respond to her whereabouts, she would occasionally purposefully not pick up his calls. Neither defensora sought some idealized form of complete independence, but autonomy was forged in the spaces opened up through their commitments to the struggle and in relation to those obligations which conditioned their multiple social roles.

Pilar’s ability to move about more or less freely allowed her to accompany me as I returned to recording defensoras’ political histories. It was late June, and we had concluded the rehabilitation of three anti-extractivism murals just the day before. As usual, Pilar and I met at the plaza around eight in the morning. Pilar was taking me to see María Rosa. This visit would
be for the purpose of introducing myself to María Rosa and inquiring if she would be interested in talking with me on the record about her experiences in the struggle. Pilar had difficulties getting in touch with María Rosa, who was frequently out of reach on her cell phone. At around nine in the morning, when Pilar arrived at the plaza, we immediately called María Rosa’s cell phone which, unsurprisingly, went straight to voicemail. Pilar called a few more times with no success. While we sat at a bench, figuring out how to reach her, one María Rosa’s neighbors walked by and told us that María Rosa was home. Hearing this, Pilar decided that we should just stop by María Rosa’s house.

But, first, we needed to collect milk going to Pilar’s house, a distribution point for the Vaso de Leche group her family participated in.17 This day had actually been Pilar’s sister’s turn to collect their milk allotment, five gallons, but because Pilar’s niece was sick, Pilar agreed to pick up the share instead. The city’s central distribution point was la municipalidad (city hall), which faces the plaza on José Gálvez street. We walked over to the side of the building, where a large, blue metal gate serves as an entry-point for vehicles, deliveries, and other less formal transactions happening within the building. The gates were open and we walked over to the right side, just past the entrance. A group six women were queueing to pick up milk. Each woman brought her own plastic container which was filled from large metal milk canisters. Pilar told me that the milk comes from Sucre, a municipality close to Celendín. The woman in charge of distributing the milk to each group is one of Pilar’s neighbors. When we reach her, Pilar asked her to make sure her container was filled with the correct milk share. The previous day they were

17 Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk) is a social assistance program that originated in Lima in the early 1980s against the backdrop of paltry maternal and infant government programs for impoverished populations and a heightening economic crisis. This nutritional program, based on the distribution of pre-determined quantities of milk primarily to pregnant and lactating women and young children, began as a contingency plan by the municipality of Lima. Eventually, women’s activism through marches and mobilizations pressured the central state to formalize the program into law and expand it to municipalities across the country.
not given enough milk, and it ran out before five children in Pilar’s group received their portion. We took a mototaxi from the municipality to Pilar’s house to drop off the milk. Pilar and I carried the milk container together, which, though not excessively heavy, felt like a large weight for one person to carry, especially an expectant mother who has been advised toward bed rest. At Pilar’s home, we drop off the container, which remains by the door where another volunteer (a mother) will distribute to children picking up their cup of milk.

Having concluded Pilar’s milk duties, we walked to San Isidro, the neighborhood where María Rosa lives. Pilar had recommended that we bring something to present to María Rosa on our visits, so we stopped at a couple of stores on the way to get fruit. We found María Rosa at home, and I explained my work and function within the women’s organization, concluding by asking if she would allow me to come back to record her oral narrative. María Rosa agreed and arranged for me to come back on the weekend. I was grateful to have had Pilar’s company when meeting other compañeras. I was also cognizant of how Pilar’s help depended on the autonomy she was able to exercise within her daily schedule.

Luchadoras’ flexibility, however, was vulnerable to the gender dynamics within the struggle. Compañeros sometimes undermined women’s agentive capacity in the very same locations where luchadoras were able to loosen the hold of heteronormative patriarchal forces. Oscar, the other co-founder JOC, would often call Pilar’s cell phone or show up at her house late at night to discuss the youth group’s activities. I often learned about their late-night conversations the following day, when Pilar would update me on whatever she had discussed since we had said our goodbyes the evening prior. As a member of the women’s organization and the youth artivist group, Pilar was involved in planning activities for both groups. This meant that, in effect, she ended up picking up Oscar’s phone calls at any hour and usually met
with him on short notice. Oscar’s calling on Pilar demonstrates how luchadores operate through machista frameworks of entitlement, where women—even compañeras—are expected to be at men’s beck and call.

By following Pilar through these series of movements that literally reflect how Pilar maneuvers her life as a luchadora, I have shown how luchadoras are hard-working women even when the work they do is unremunerated, normalized as a gendered obligation, or goes unacknowledged as labor. More importantly, however, moving captures how mobility is through and through a function of personal autonomy. I depict how Pilar asserts herself as a luchadora by harnessing the freedom of movement facilitated, in part, by the circumstances of her conjugal status.

Women’s search for autonomy and claims to space within the terrain of struggle in the extractive frontier exhibit a decolonial orientation that works from within the fissures of structures of power. Autonomy gestures not toward individualism but toward a nonheteronormative, collective type of relationality amidst economic precariousness and heteropatriarchal capitalism. Singleness, but also financial security, in the heteropatriarchal social terrain navigated by my collaborators enabled the expansion of women’s politics. Singleness bolstered women’s autonomy, and it enabled a feminist praxis to emerge through their political identities as defensoras. Singleness, thus, is potentiated to become a key feature
propelling women’s politicization in the context of ecoterritorial defense in Cajamarca. Not having to account to a partner about when and where they go allows defensoras to pursue the organization’s activities with greater ease than counterparts with spouses who are immediately present. Untethered by the domestic obligations originating with a spouse or other intimate partner, “single” defensoras are routinely more involved in a wider range of organizational activities. Lizbet and Pilar in particular cultivated greater political roles through the space afforded by this circumstance.

In this fraught ecoterritorial conflictive context, single motherhood in Cajamarca prevails as an unexpected insurgent process that challenges heteronormative patriarchal orders in various domains. Single motherhood permits women to cultivate political lives with more entrance and say in the way ecoterritorial defense takes place. It also undermines the heteropatriarchal normativity of the (nuclear) family unit in urban and semi-urban settings in Peru—at least as imagined by the state and reinforced by Christian religious mores. Both in Cajamarca and Celendín, it is a common sight to see mothers with their infants and small children on the streets. As I learned while I lived there, single motherhood was not unusual, and it was something I noted among my collaborators. Although single motherhood emerges as a fact of life for my collaborators, it is not a general condition of life for all defensoras. Roughly half of my collaborators in Celendín were single mothers. In Cajamarca, the percentage was smaller, but still significant.

Yet being a single mother can also be restrictive, augmenting compañeras’ economic insecurity in provincial Cajamarca. Compañeras continued to maintain their commitments to the struggle alongside the struggle to survive under conditions of precarious labor. Unemployment and underemployment did not preclude their politicization, it ironically afforded them time to
devote to it, but it was a source of constant distress. Compañeras learned to figure out how to do their political work with the limited resources at hand; whether time, mobility, or finances. And, so, autonomy emerges a core feature of a cuerpo territorio feminist praxis.

Autonomy is not about severing all ties to the social worlds defensoras participate in. Rather, autonomy is refracted through a struggle to survive rooted in the place (geospatial territory) that rubs against and gradually transforms the hegemonic narratives of women’s sociopolitical position. Defensoras’ freedom to salir (go out) as a form of autonomy is imbued with tensions predicated on kin relations that they are not necessarily interested in foregoing. Indeed, the fight for their cuerpo territorio is conceptualized through the preservation of a place where their children and grandchildren may have a healthy and safe livelihood. Sra. Hilda, one of the older compañeras in Celendín, told me that her grandchildren are her motivation to go on in the struggle. She fears the youth will suffer if the lakes at Conga are exploited because this means they will not have crops to live on, “ya que la base fundamental es el agua...Y por eso es que tenemos nuestra agua, y nuestro medio ambiente. Ellos van a ser los beneficiados con el tiempo.”

Read together, the two parts of this chapter show how compañeras’ defense of their cuerpo territorio entails facing heteronormative patriarchal systems that order the spaces of their daily lives. However, the multi-dimensionality of their lives means that defensoras do not adhere to a singular definition of cuerpo territorio. They still figure out ways to still do the primary work of resisting mega-extractive projects in unity and alongside deeply rooted differences. This, then, demonstrates how counter-hegemonic struggles work to achieve goals even with internal

18 “Being that the fundamental base is water…That is why we have our water, and our environment. They will be the beneficiaries in time.”
contradictions and conflicting perspectives. The role of defensora is not predicated on a narrow enactment of defense nor on a singular vision/definition of what is implicated in cuerpo territorio. Yet even so, these internal differences do not annul the decolonizing nature of their roles for, as decolonial feminist Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso has said,

La descolonización...[es] más como un programa en continuo desarrollo y por desarrollar, no es algo que se haga de una vez y para siempre y mucho menos en manos de una élite interesada. La descolonización es procesual y siempre ha estado en camino sin poder completarse. Añadiría algo más, la descolonización podríamos pensarla también como condición, una condición permanente que nos hace ser los sujetos histórica y geopolíticamente definidos que somos.19 (2016, 9)

19 “Decolonization...[is] more like a program in continuous development and to be developed, it is not something once and for ever done and much less from the hands of an interested elite. Decolonization is processual and has always been ongoing without completion. I would add something else, that we might think of decolonization like a condition as well, a permanent condition that makes us the historically- and geopolitically-defined subjects that we are.”
Chapter 5

Vivencias: Stories of Women Defending the Territory in Peru’s Northern Andes

Testimonies. Stories. Life stories.
In the beginning it is hard to speak, to write, to tell of abuse in the first person, because the first assault is on the spirit.

Inés Hernández Avila, Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios

The following are three accounts from my collaborators in Celendín. Three narratives of political histories; histories of their roles in the anti-extractivist struggle of their community.

These are their stories.

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Consuelo

“Al margen de…cuestión política o algo, yo defiendo porque pienso que es el planeta, es nuestra casa grande.”

1 “Aside from a political question or something, I defend [the environment] because I think it’s the planet, it’s our big house.”
Consuelo is in her early sixties. A calm woman with a kind face, Consuelo and her husband, Roberto, manage a small hostel in Celendín. They’ve raised two children together, now in their twenties. Consuelo is from Celendín, but when she was eight years old, she moved to Chiclayo, a northern coastal city. Consuelo completed a degree in nutritional studies at the Universidad Agraria (Agrarian University) in Chiclayo, but work opportunities led her to take jobs in other parts of the country. When her son and daughter were still young children, Consuelo was hired to work on a project in the region of Huánuco, in the central Andes. At the time, both she and her husband were unemployed, leading Consuelo to face a tough decision: to take a job which afforded her the salary needed to support her family, but required her to move, or to wait for an opening closer to home. Consuelo chuckles as she recounts how, for better or worse, she made the decision on her own.

*Women should make decisions independently when the livelihood of the family is at stake, though it’s still a good idea to consult one’s husband, even if a woman will ultimately make the choice.*

Consuelo had told Roberto: “Yo me voy. Si quieres tú me sigues.” (I’m going. If you want, follow me.) Her husband understood and the family moved together to Huánuco. While the family lived in Huánuco, Consuelo often had to take multi-day trips to rural communities for work. Roberto cared for the children along with a housekeeper they had hired. In effect, this meant that Consuelo was absent from their household for a considerable period of time each week and, thus, unavailable to perform duties normally expected of a mother and wife.

*Roberto stepped in to act as both mother and father. He bathed and dressed the children, and assumed other care-taking tasks. The children used to call Roberto “mapi” (a blending of “mami” and “papi”). It takes luck to find a partner like Roberto.*

Roberto, in supporting Consuelo’s choice, ensured they raised their family together.
At the time, Consuelo’s work brought her to Cerro de Pasco, the gilded city built to add glory to the Spanish colonial empire. Cerro de Pasco is about a three-hour car ride away from Huánuco. Both Consuelo and Roberto familiarized themselves with the city which, even when they frequented it in the 1990s, was a starkly different place from the crown jewel it once had been. It was Cerro de Pasco that first opened up Consuelo’s eyes to the social problems instigated by mining: “me impactó mucho.” ([It] greatly impacted me.)

*Cerro de Pasco is a horrible city. Poverty there was striking. There was a river that came near the city with clear water, but which eventually mixed with an opaque stream that had nothing growing on its banks. The opaqueness of the stream’s water was a consequence of landslides from the mining at Cerro de Pasco. Nothing grew there despite the reforestation attempts alongside the road leading to Cerro de Pasco, where tailings had been deposited.*

Consuelo asks Roberto (who was with us in the kitchen at this moment) if he also recalls the tree planting going on at that time. Roberto chimes in explaining that nothing took root there. Roberto narrates that when he returned to Huánuco on a recent trip he asked an inhabitant why the city had grown so much. Roberto was told that it was due to in-migration from Cerro de Pasco.

*Practically in tandem, Consuelo and Roberto tell me that the open-pit mine at Cerro de Pasco has invaded the center of the city.*

*The mine is pushing the inhabitants away. As it expands, the mine encroaches the livable spaces of the city, creating an urban perimeter surrounding the half-mile wide pit. The mine has practically been paying off residents in order to expand. This is how it has gradually increased its size and caused emigration to Huánuco.*

The issue that arose, Roberto points out, is that the city of Huánuco can no longer grow geographically, causing migrants from Cerro de Pasco to settle instead in the peripheries of Lima.
There had once been a project to re-settle Cerro de Pasco’s population in a nearby location. Small, modular houses were erected for the city’s residents. No one wanted to leave, however. Moreover, only housing was built, but no commercial structures. So, businesses were reluctant to move to this new sector. Re-settlement was rejected by people. It’s difficult to make people to move when they have established roots in a place. Similar situations exist in the “selva” (Amazonian jungle territories) where people are forced to leave their homes because of the dangerous levels of environmental pollution. Some people do not want to move despite the contamination. It’s the same situation with hydrodams. Companies arrive with entitled attitudes, effectively telling communities they must move because the land needed for their projects, even promising payment and re-location. But will people live under the same conditions wherever they are moved to?

Consuelo doesn’t think so—not in most cases.

“Vivir en la sierra, vivir en un lugar como Celendín…me ha hecho conocer mi realidad”

When she lived and worked in Chiclayo, Consuelo was unaware of the problems in Celendín. She attributes this, in part, to the disconnect people experience when they become absorbed in their jobs and in raising children. Her lack of consciousness persisted even after she had moved back to Celendín, around 2008. At that time, Yanacocha had been holding weekly dialogues on Thursdays, known as “jueves de diálogo,” to engage with the public about the Conga Mine. Consuelo attended a few times, but quit going after she was dismissed several times by company personnel when she inquired for more information about the project. Still, she admits that during her first year back, she saw the mining project as a positive endeavor. It was also through those dialogue meetings Consuelo learned about the expansive network of lakes in the province. Consuelo eventually learned that the mine was “comprando” (buying) local support among the population.

“Living in the highlands, living in a place like Celendín…has allowed me to know my reality”
The company bribed officials, organized school trips to bring students to the mining site, and created internships for college students. The local government, too, was deeply implicated in the project. Simultaneously, community members began organizing in order to raise awareness about the adverse impacts of such a project.

It was through her son Iván that Consuelo initially became aware of the problems surrounding the intended mine. Iván was attending the environmental engineering program at the satellite campus of the Universidad Nacional de Cajamarca (National University at Cajamarca). Iván joined classmates and faculty who began mobilizing in response to the advances of the Conga mining project.

In addition to what she learned from Iván, Consuelo’s awareness was deepened through her participation in workshops and counter-informational sessions organized by fellow community members.

“Entonces, a raíz de eso es donde comenzamos a entender lo que significaba el proyecto,” Consuelo told me. (Thus, because of that [informational sessions] we began understanding what the project meant.) This realization stood in contrast to her attitude and relative ignorance in the early 1990s, when she had returned briefly in Celendín after the conclusion of a work assignment in Cajamarca. Though Consuelo had heard of Yanacocha then, which was starting its operations in the region, she paid little attention to the mine at the time.

"It had sounded like a good project."

By the time she settled back in Celendín permanently, activists increasingly organized activities including media campaigns, workshops, public vigils, and formed an organizational coalition.
called PIC-Plataforma Interinstitucional de Celendín (Inter-institutional Platform of Celendín), to expand awareness.

As the anti-mining movement picked up momentum, Consuelo, who had initially attended events with her family, found herself attending marches on her own. Although Consuelo did not know them personally, she began noticing the recurring faces of the women who would later form the women’s organization in Celendín. “Yo me acuerdo que [decía] cuando habían las marchas: ¿Ay, dónde, pues, me junto? Yo vivo acá ya ocho años, pero como que no tengo muchas relaciones públicas se puede decir, entonces estoy bien limitada a mi circulo. Y la veía siempre a la hermana Beatriz…y por ahí me metía.” (I remember saying when there were marches: Well, then, where should I join? I live here already eight years, but one could say that I don’t have many public relations, so I’m very limited to my circle. And I always saw sister Beatriz…and through there I would make my way.)

I am lucky in that I had Roberto’s support when I decided to participate in the struggle. Roberto managed and took care of my hostel duties when I occasionally left to participate in mobilizations.

When Iván mentioned that women were organizing and had formed their own group, Consuelo asked for his help to find out how she could join it. Consuelo didn’t hear about it again for months until one day Dana, a foreigner who settled in Celendín around this time, invited Consuelo to a meeting.

At the meeting, Consuelo recognized many of the faces she had seen at various events.

At the meeting, each woman told her story, narrating how she had come to the organization. “Nos hemos integrado al grupo de las mujeres y cada uno cuenta su historia, el maltrato que han sufrido, porque han estado más directamente en el enfrentamiento.” (We’ve integrated ourselves
in the women’s group and each one tells her story, the mistreatment each has suffered, because [some] have been more directly part of confrontation.)

Through the organization, women have access to a variety of opportunities that empower them.

Consuelo observes that she’s learned a great deal at the women’s meetings she’s been invited to in other places, including a meeting in Piura where self-protection was a major theme. Consuelo has attended an international women’s meeting in Cajamarca, where women discussed “la problemática de la mujer” (the difficulties women face). Through these meetings and exchanges, she’s learned how other women think through the challenges they are facing in their home towns and the alternatives that exist in the struggle against large extractive projects.

It is thanks to this collectivity that the women’s group has had opportunities to exchange these perspectives.

Without an affiliation to the women’s organization, Consuelo would not have been invited to participate in the regional and national meetings.

Women should establish their own organizations in every town and city; though, one of the largest hurdles women face is commitment. The function of our organization goes beyond what was set out at the start.

“Es un espacio donde podemos compartir de repente nuestras preocupaciones, no solamente personales, si no de lo que estamos pasando.” (It’s a space where we can perhaps share our worries, not only personal, but about what’s happening to us all.)

This is a chronic problem for women—we seldom create the time to ensure we have spaces for ourselves, where we can get away from our daily duties as wives or mothers. The group allows women the space to share their fears, feelings, and reasons for defending their hometown. Women learn to listen to each other through sharing because oftentimes we don’t know how to listen amongst ourselves. Women’s participation in the organization is an opportunity for each member to support the group according to her abilities. Some compañeras are better at cooking,
while others at public speaking. Still, this is an area of growth for the group: helping each compañera identify and hone these skills.

“Nosotros como mujeres, [como] amas de casa, vemos pues que [en] todas nuestras actividades utilizamos el agua…Como decía, yo me identifico con la tierra. Yo, realmente, cuando veo noticias a través de las redes, cuando veo la problemática ambiental, que de diferentes actividades nos estamos destruyendo, me da mucha pena.”

A healthy environment and a clean planet is owed to future generations. These notions transcend political affiliation. The commitment is with my planet, my people.

Consuelo is a defensora because she believes theirs is a just fight. While acknowledging that she is not the type to march at the front lines or to go out to communities to organize, she is active in teaching children through the catechism classes she leads. “Mi función, de repente, es con los niños. Les hago recordar…de alguna manera les trato de motivar, de que conserven. Les cuento un poquito de la historia de nuestra lucha. Algunos niños recuerdan…Yo creo que como profesores, tenemos una herramienta muy importante para concientizar a los niños, [y] jóvenes.” (My function, perhaps, is with the children. I remind them…in some way I try to motivate them to preserve [the environment]. I tell them a little about the story of our struggle. Some children remember…I think that as teachers we have an important tool for consciousness-raising with children and youths.) As a woman, however, her motivation for participating in the struggle is simultaneously linked to identification with the land: “Damos vida. La tierra nos da vida. Entonces no podemos ser indiferentes a un elemento, en este caso el agua, que es vital para todos.” (We give life. The earth gives us life. So, we cannot be indifferent to an element, in this case water, that is vital for everyone.)

3 “We as women, [as] housewives, notice that we use water in all our activities…As I said, I identify with the earth. I, really, when I see news on the web, when I see the problems of the environment, which we are destroying due to different activities, it gives me a lot of sorrow.”
Pilar

“Como parte de la lucha social que hemos vivido en estos últimos años, yo he participado en muchas actividades. He sido participe de muchas historias. Algunas muy bonitas, algunas muy tristes.”

Pilar was initiated in the struggle for water on November 16, 2011. Pilar’s mother, a vendor at Celendín’s market, had talked to Pilar about an upcoming mobilization in defense of water. When the anti-Conga movement was starting, Pilar did not pay attention to the struggle or to the questions surrounding Celendín’s water sources. It was only upon joining the mobilization in 2011, and observing the magnitude of support in the defense of water, that she realized this was a serious issue.

*The water was in danger. Compañeros took the stage at that mobilization and explained what was going to happen to Celendín’s water sources along with the lakes that feed the headwaters of the province. This depiction likely caused people to become conscious of what would happen to Celendín if they allowed the mining project to go on.*

*Around that time, participating in mobilizations was complicated.*

Pilar’s son was six-months old, so extra preparations were required before Pilar could join the marches. “Teníamos que sacrificar con mi mamá porque yo tenía que levantarme a las cinco de la mañana…hacer la limpieza de la casa. A lavar los pañales, la ropa, y hacer el fiambre.” (We had to sacrifice [ourselves] with my mother because I had to wake up at five in the morning…clean the house. Wash diapers, clothes, and prepare foodstuffs.)
In the weeks following the November sixteenth mobilization, a “paro” (general strike) ensued during which market vendors were only allowed to sell their goods between five and seven in the morning.

Thus, by the time Pilar’s mother returned from the market, Pilar had readied her son and their lunches, and they would join the day’s actions together.

Although Pilar had not attended university, she was invited by local university students to join them in the manifestations.

They saw my manner of struggling and they, the youths from the university, sought me to fight with them.

During those months of declared emergency, Pilar prepared together with the university students. She learned from them “lo qué es lucha” (what a struggle is) because she didn’t know anything about being part of a struggle before joining them. When the state of emergency was lifted, the group of university students continued mobilizing. Pilar protested with them, also participating in their excursions to other provincial communities to raise awareness of the problems they faced.

“Salíamos a protestar. La policía nos agredía. Todos los días nos disparaban bombas lacrimógenas, nos pegaban con sus palos. Y así…muy duro la lucha para defender el agua.”

In June 2012, Pilar was part of the ranks from Celendín that joined the struggle in Cajamarca (city). After seventeen days, Pilar returned to Celendín to get a change of clothes and to check on her son, who was being cared for by her mother, before departing to Cajamarca once again. This time she shortened her stay in Cajamarca and, after a week, Pilar came back to Celendín, deciding to stay put there. Pilar’s voice quivers with emotion as she narrates the events following her second return to Celendín. Pilar seldom talks about this experience.

s “We went out to protest. The police attacked us. Every day they shot tear gas, they hit us with their sticks. And so…[it’s been] very difficult to defend the water.”
On July third, a group of compañeros sought to persuade construction workers to join the “paro.” The workers had continued their work at the new site for one of Celendin’s oldest public schools while practically the entire city had gone on strike. The compañeros met with the workers for an extended period of time, until, abruptly, the construction workers left the construction site with iron rods in their hands. We marched behind the construction workers who had begun smashing windows and breaking vehicles. As they destroyed what lay in their path, the workers shouted: ‘this is how protesting is done.’ By the time the workers and activists reached the plaza, people were running up and down, and the police had begun launching tear gas.

Despite the turmoil Pilar remained with the group of luchadores she had been marching with.

When the protestors reached the doors of the “municipalidad” (city hall), they called on the mayor to meet with them. Even though we continued fighting to defend the water, the mayor was arranging the independence day festivities for the end July. The police proceeded to drive us away.

Pilar recounts having run to Jirón Unión, one of the streets connecting the plaza and the city’s coliseum.

A helicopter flew overhead.

As she crossed from one side of the street to the other, Pilar noticed an adolescent boy beside her. Upon reaching the opposite sidewalk, Pilar heard cries behind her which made her turn around.

The youth was now lying the ground.

Pilar remains easily-agitated by the recollection of Cesar Medina’s fallen body.

The military shooter had left an enormous hole in the boy’s skull. At that moment, I did not feel. I thought he was hurt—I didn’t think he was dead. And I ran to tell people ahead of me that someone was injured.
Pilar couldn’t immediately make sense of why Cesar, who had been behind her, had been shot.

Why not the compañeros in front who were making their way to the coliseum?

It dawned on her that the military had been shooting from the helicopters.

And at the coliseum, police and military officers began shooting rubber bullets and tear gas at protestors. It was horrible. The police attacked us. They told us we were prostitutes, that we should go home. I did not feel scared, I only wanted to fight on.

In a broken voice, Pilar tells me that this has been their struggle—their life. She will continue doing it “hasta morir” (until [I] die).

A state of emergency was enacted once again in Cajamarca after these protests. The death toll was four in Celendín and one in Bambamarca. The day following the funerals, we attempted to hold a public vigil for the dead compañeros, but the military and police impeded it. Instead, vigil participants were searched.

Pilar recalls being pushed against a wall and searched in ways that felt more like sexual groping.

The state of emergency was eventually lifted and Pilar continued participating in mobilizations.

It’s been difficult to garner people’s support after the killings during the July 2012 protests. People became fearful of protesting.

In anticipation of the two-year anniversary of the first general strike against Conga, another indefinite strike was convened in Celendín and Bambamarca in 2013.

Pilar decided to join this strike in an area of Bambamarca known as El Empalme. On this occasion, Pilar was captured by police officers breaking up the roadblock. One officer called on others to specifically capture Pilar: “Ella es una terrorista, ella está en todos los lugares, agitando a la gente.” (She’s one of the terrorists, she is everywhere, agitating people.) Pilar had tried to run away from the police with other compañeros, but she was caught when an officer managed to
hit her at the waist with his firearm. After being hit, Pilar was thrust to the ground and eventually led to an ambulance.

*Something wet trickled down my pants leg.*

Upon arriving in Cajamarca, Pilar asked for permission to check her leg and discovered that she was bleeding from the blow to her waist. Pilar had managed to get in touch with a leader from Celendín, who helped with her release. Pilar was taken to the regional hospital at Cajamarca to have her injury treated, but the hospital staff denied her any treatment.

*They did not want to create problems for themselves.*

The compañeros sought care for her at private medical practices, but soon found this option unavailable because of a holiday. The stress from the capture and injury caused Pilar to desist from pursuing further medical attention or any documentation of her mistreatment under police custody. She never denounced the abuse.

Today, Pilar feels that she has more energy and strength than before for the struggle. Even now, on her second pregnancy, Pilar actively participates in meetings. She continues the mural work she commenced a few years back with a youth group in Celendín. In 2014, an artist collective from Lima known as “los tomatitos” (Tomate Colectivo) painted a mural about the struggle on a wall close the main plaza. The mural depicted an illustrated timeline of the collective struggle in Celendín dating back to 2004. Key moments of the struggle were portrayed, including the creation of the PIC, the 2012 national march for water, and the militarized violence of the 2011 and 2012 regional strikes. The owner of the property on which the mural was painted was eventually intimidated by police and coerced into erasing the mural. Pilar along with a group of young artivists decided to paint even more murals as a response to the
repressive police action. “Muy indignante que lo borren, el mural.” (Outrages that they erased it, the mural.) In 2014, Pilar and the newly-forming youth group began their practice of painting murals that speak about their struggle and the defense of water.

“In 2014, Pilar and the newly-forming youth group began their practice of painting murals that speak about their struggle and the defense of water."

“**Bueno, seguimos nosotros con el arte. Seguimos luchando, y vamos a seguir pintando.**”

Pilar sees herself as a “luchadora” (fighter) whose foundation lies in learning.

*To learn to value, to love the earth. To recognize that without water we do not live.*

At the front of the struggle, she motivates “el pueblo” (the people) to continue “luchando” (fighting). By positioning herself as a leader, Pilar attempts to demonstrate that all leaders do not seek self-promotion or personal benefit.

*This is an effort to lead through unconditional commitment, by way of example.*

Pilar surmises that ten years from now, there may not be any water in her region. This possibility, along with a desire for her children (born and unborn) to see the wonders of their lakes, motivates her to continue fighting.

*However, not everyone in Celendín values the murals.*

Pilar wishes that people would acknowledge the murals as part of their history and to maintain the struggle. “Y también que reconozcan que como mujeres también somos valiosas. Que también nosotras tenemos sentimientos…que no seamos maltratadas por parte de los varones ni por parte de nuestras autoridades…que esas cosas…todo ese maltrato que hemos sufrido por defender nuestras tierras, no nos ha atemorizado. Si no que cada día nos ha levantado y nos ha dado fuerzas para seguir adelante, demostrando al mundo entero que nosotros sí podemos paralizar a una mina asesina.” (And also that they recognize that as women, we, too, are

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6 “Well, we continue with the art. We continue fighting, and we’ll keep on painting.”
valuable. That we, too, have feelings…that we not be mistreated by men nor by our [government] authorities…that those things…all that abuse we’ve suffered because we’ve defended our lands, has not terrified us. Instead, each day it has lifted us and provided us with strength to push forward, showing the entire world that we can stop a murderous mine.)
“No dejar que estas mineras nos quiten lo que Dios nos ha dado…que es el agua para vivir—que sin ella no podemos vivir. Oro hay, pero sin el agua no se puede, morimos.”

Aída is a mother of four and grandmother to one. She lives with her husband, a teacher and activist, who like her remains an active participant in the movement. Though Aída participated in the Marcha Nacional del Agua (National Water March) in 2012, she has never visited the lakes at Conga’s site. Her youngest children who were six months and two years old at the time were too small to bring to the lakes when actions were frequently done near Conga.

At the movement’s height, however, the entire family grew used to the routine in defense of our waters.

“Yo tenía que salir todo los días, sin dejar un día…porque ya esa era como una rutina de nosotros que se hizo carne.” (I had to go out every day, without missing a day…because for us it was already a routine that became our flesh.)

It was also around this time when we started to notice the presence of infiltrators – state and corporate spies – in the movement.

This realization prompted Aída to begin leaving her youngest children behind at home in the care of her oldest. Thus, Aída, her husband, and an older children attended demonstrations.

Before learning about the Conga Mine Project, Aída was part of Peru’s National Federal Organization of Farming, Indigenous, Native, and Self-employed Women, FENMUCARINAP (Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Indígenas, Nativas y Asalariadas de Perú). Aída joined FENMUCARINAP in 2010 when the organization came to Celendín intending to create a
chapter there. The FENMUCARINAP’s representatives asked different organizations to convene women from within their membership to a meeting serving as an introduction to the national organization. Lourdes Huanca, the national organization’s president, invited Aída to join the newly-forming local branch.

In 2011, Celendín’s FENMUCARINAP chapter, FENMUCARINA-Celendín, received an invitation to unite with PIC-Plataforma Interinstitucional de Celendín. Accepting the invitation, the chapter began supporting the struggle by organizing in Celendín and at other provincial communities. Supporting the mobilizations by preparing ollas comunes (communal pots of food), FENMUCARINA-Celendín created commissions that collected food donations for meals during the day. Each member of the organization had multiple roles: a role at home, at the organization, at mobilizations, and so forth. As women, we had to come to agreement with our husbands because sometimes they did not let us go out. We needed to leave pre-made breakfast and lunches at home before being able to participate in movement actions. Every night, laundry would be washed, household preparations made, so that the following day we could continue supporting with food preparation. Neighbors were willing to give foodstuff for the cause.

Aída and her fellow members also prepared meals for compañeros arriving from external communities.

Eventually, when the ollas comunes finished, we would join the demonstrations, marching with their posters and banners, and carrying our children alongside.

FENMUCARINA-Celendín eventually decided to discontinue its participation in the struggle as an organization, but some members continued to mobilize on an individual basis. We realized that political interests were attempting to co-opt the organization and our participation in the struggle.

“Nosotros no queríamos ser uno de esos, queríamos ser independientes. No queremos que nos chantajeen. Y participamos libremente.” (We did not want to be one of those [co-opted organizations], we wanted to be independent. We don’t want to be blackmailed. And [now] we participate freely.)
Our members had been participating independently by the time the 2012 strike in June and July took place. The deadly events during that strike prompted some of us from FENMUCARINA-Celendín to form a distinct women’s organization to collectively participate in the struggle.

“La gente nos miraba mal. Nos decían ‘haraganas,’ ‘váyanse a su casa’…insultos de esa manera. Pero gracias a esta lucha nosotros, las mujeres, hemos abierto los ojos. Ahora sabemos por lo menos reclamar nuestros derechos—no dejarnos atropellar ante cualquier persona que sea.”

The new organization’s intention was to support each other as women.

“Porque somos invisibilizadas. Somos atropelladas, nuestros derechos…No nos hacen caso por los esposos machistas, la misma sociedad que no nos ve bien.” (Because we are invisibilized. We are run over, our rights…We are not listened to because of machista husbands, society itself that doesn’t see us in a good light.)

Some people rejected the new organization—and women’s part in it.

The women continued their activities in the struggle, however, attending workshops aimed at “capacitarnos” (training and preparing ourselves) and by joining outings to lakes.

The National Water March in February of 2012 was a moving experience.

Some of Aída’s courage to face the insults hurled at her by people was inspired by demonstrations of wide support during the march.

The march was “un río de agua por todas las partes” (A river of water everywhere).

Aída and her husband marched together, but they left their children behind at home on that occasion.

8 “People gave us dirty looks. They called us ‘loafers,’ ‘go home’…insults like that. But thanks to this struggle we, women, have opened our eyes. Now we at least know how to demand our rights—not allowing ourselves to be knocked down before any person whatsoever.”

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Until the deadly confrontations during the strike of 2012, defensores had been going out to protest every day.

Aída blames “infiltrados” (infiltrators) for inciting the violence that led to the killing of the compañeros.

That day in July, the infiltrators did things that defensores disagreed with.

A premonition had kept Aída at home that morning in July. Her husband suggested that they join the demonstrations later in the day.

Around the middle of the day, construction workers left the new site of the Coronel Cortegana public school and took to the street with iron rods, breaking car windows and threatening people.

Aída’s husband arrived home around that time urging her to join him to see what was happening at the plaza.

In the dream on the eve of the strike, I felt something was not right.

Aída decided to stay behind while her husband ventured back out. As her husband walked toward the plaza, Aída’s gaze followed him from the doorstep.

Tear gas was being launched near the plaza by the time he made it there.

Meanwhile, at the plaza, Aída’s husband was attempting to put out the fire that had begun burning down city hall.

Some protestors tried to stop him, yelling that he should let it burn. They attempted to stop him by force, beating him to keep him from putting the flames out. Then, the shooting began. It was terrible. So I went up there, to the plaza, because my husband and son were there. Police officers were shooting at civilians.
Just before Aída and a compañera entered the plaza from the Dos de Mayo street, some officers turned toward them, shooting in their direction. Aída faced them and told them that her children were at the plaza.

*One of the policemen, an officer from Celendín, instructed the others not to shoot.*

From fear that they might kill her, Aída turned back home.

*The shooting renewed. Military personnel that had arrived at Celendín’s coliseum made their way up to the plaza. People who had been at the demonstration dispersed with the shooting.*

Aída looked onto the plaza standing at a block from her home.

*A helicopter flew overhead. The military shot at the crowds from the helicopters.*

“Entonces, nos decían: escóndanse. Por las balas perdidas.” (Then, they told us: hide. Because of the stray bullets.)

*The police assaulted youths, detaining and taking them on their helicopters.*

Aída’s voice wavers as she narrates having witnessed the death of a compañero. Upon seeing the dead body carried away, Aída re-entered her home to check on the children. One of her sons was not home. Aída’s son would later tell her that he, too, saw the dead boy transported on a motorcycle.

*The military followed demonstrators to their homes, taunting them by calling them cowards and daring them to come out of their houses.*

“Nos llamaban: ‘cobardes, vengan.’ Pero nosotros así sin nada, ¿qué vamos a hacer?” (They called us: “cowards, come here.” But without anything, what could we do?) Once home, Aída dialed her son and her husband. Aída got in touch with her son; she asked if he and his dad were coming home for lunch. Aída’s son responded that they were already heading back. Tearfully,
Aída describes seeing the results of what had been done to her husband at the plaza. “Lo encuentro a mi hijo con su papá, que todo lo habían golpeado. Dice que lo habían cogido y lo querían dejar todo…lo querían matar. Lo golpeaban todos, y mi esposo decía: ‘No, no me peguen.’” (I find my son with his dad, who had been beaten all over. He says that they grabbed him and they wanted to…they wanted to kill him. They all beat him, and my husband was saying: “No, don’t hit me.”) At city hall, Aída’s son had stayed with his father to ensure that they would not hurt him.

He pleaded with them to not kill his father. Simultaneously, compañeros were taking refuge at the main church by the plaza to avoid being arrested and jailed.

“Y, pues, así nosotros seguimos en nuestra lucha. No nos quedamos. No nos dan miedo. Defender nuestras aguas—lo que es vida para nosotros.” 9

Similar things were happening in Cajamarca, where women’s pots were kicked over while they prepared communal meals. People were tear-gassed and even journalists were assaulted. Their cameras were taken. Some of the aggressors weren’t police, but security personnel contracted by the mine.

“Hacia las compañeras también, les maltrataban, les golpeaban…” ([Violence] toward compañeras as well, they were abused, they were beaten.)

During a minister’s visit after a state of emergency many compañeras were beaten.

Since the conflict, Aída’s life has changed on a personal level. Her participation in the conflict has led her to learn how to “reclamar mis derechos…y defender lo que nos pertenece.” (Demand my rights…and to defend what belongs to us.) Her family life has also undergone changes.

9 “And, so, like this we continue in our struggle. We do not stay [behind]. They don’t scare us. To defend our water—which is life to us.”
The workshops brought by external organizations to Celendín have taught women about their rights and how to claim them.

“Nos dan a conocer cuáles son nuestros derechos, nuestros roles ante nuestros reclamos y bien con ellos…Con nuestra experiencia que hemos vivido…de repente para otras generaciones sea una experiencia para que ellos continúen con nuestra lucha, que hemos comenzado. No dejarlo. Que estas transnacionales vengan a quitarnos lo que nos pertenece. Nuestras lagunas. Nuestros ríos.” ([Organizations] teach us what our rights are, our roles in our demands and [things are] good with them [the organizations]…With the experience we’ve lived…perhaps to other generations it will be an experience for them to continue with our struggle, which we have begun. To not abandon it. That these multinational [corporations] come to take what belongs to us. Our lakes. Our rivers.)

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Judith Stacey (1988) argued that a feminist ethnography is impossible because the ethnographer’s singular production of knowledge goes against feminist politics that are sensitive to power dynamics. And, yet, it is commonplace to encounter in ethnographies some version of the phrase “it took a village to write this book.” It does take a village to write a book or a dissertation and to produce knowledge. The coloniality of knowledge minimizes and de-legitimizes this reality. This may well be where my project departs from preceding currents of feminist ethnography. Perhaps the issue is with wanting to fit it all into anthropology or ethnography. Ruth Behar (2007) writes of ethnography as a “blurred genre,” I prefer to speak of transdisciplinarity and the undisciplining of knowledge.

I contemplated for days, weeks, and months how I would write about the lives of my collaborators. How could I do them justice and write ethically about them? I consider them my collaborators because they are co-producers of this research. Yet disciplined knowledge does not easily allow for recognizing communality in knowledge-production. I was tormented by wanting to share luchadoras’ stories, but felt inhibited by the authorial position a doctoral program placed me in. I opted for what I believe is the best compromise I could arrive at: rather than attempting to invisibilize or shrink my authorial voice, I inserted myself in the written testimonios. Bringing this condition of production to the fore is a means to account for the power imbalances in my ethnographic research and writing.
Collecting testimonios was a complicated task. It entailed a high degree of trust; a situation where my collaborators’ confidence in me could overcome any misgiving about potential harm that would come of sharing their stories and thoughts. Or, maybe, their concern was less about how damaging the texts would be, and more about trusting that I would come back—that I wouldn’t simply take from them and not return. Thus, their confidence may have indicated their bet on me, a belief that I would not depart for good, like others before me had. The promise of return is not a general prerequisite for obtaining a testimonio, but it may have been an important consideration for the defensoras I worked with. I understand our exchange as the kind of reciprocal relationships forged in the struggle with outside allies—those not from Celendín or Cajamarca. And, so, I understood their testimonios to be bartered for my compromiso (commitment) to their struggle and to them. By coming back year after year, I would be able to acompañarlas (accompany them). This kind of commitment was profoundly valued because it was a form of solidarity that lessened their sense of being alone – and repeatedly abandoned – in the struggle and allowed their burden to be shared.

The testimonios I collected during my fieldwork represent parts of a “repertoire” (Taylor 2003) of knowledge about the social conflict through lived experience. Following Lynn Stephen, who builds on Taylor’s (2003) conceptualizations of repertoire and archive, I align defensoras’ narratives with the notion that “oral narratives…are important part of knowledge archives” (Stephen 2013, 17). Taylor (2003) elaborates on the concept of “repertoire” from the perspective of performance studies, demanding that we recognize how knowledge is also stored and transmitted corporeally, placing verbal and non-verbal practices alongside written text in relation to knowledge-production and -reproduction. The embodied actions that accompany the
recounting of testimonios are, thus, very much constitutive of what is known about the conflict and movement.

I agree with Taylor’s observations about the importance of recording and studying embodied action as part of keeping a repertoire of knowledge. To that end, I admit that the form of this dissertation limits my ability to convey the corporality of the knowledge defensoras have about their struggle and their political identities. A written analysis—and even the written rendition of their narratives that follows in this chapter—flattens and misses the textures of sensory communication that tells us much about ecoterritorial politics and subjectivities. Given that the narratives were audio-recorded and no video exists that captured the non-verbal transmission of their knowledge, this dissertation is accompanied by a public testimonio installation that exhibits photographs and excerpts from defensoras’ oral narratives. The installation is an addition to the repertoire on the ecoterritorial struggle in Cajamarca, and it provides the opportunity for sensing the elocution of my collaborators’ narratives.

The lived experiences that emerged from the struggle are what many of my collaborators in Peru termed vivencias. During a national feminist encuentro in Lima in October 2017, a participant of the “Violencias y Territorios” (Violences and Territories) workshop asked the others: “Cómo [podemos] sistematizar nuestras vivencias?” (How do we systematize what we’ve lived?). The participant followed this question by adding that the process of documenting these experiences is one that could be aided by researchers. A similar idea was echoed by Teresa, a seasoned activist and central figure of a women’s organization in Cajamarca, the day following the book launch of Mujeres y Conflictos Ecoterritoriales: Impactos, Estrategias, Resistencias.10

10 Rocio Silva Santisteban’s book, Mujeres y Conflictos Ecoterritoriales, in anchored on the forms of gendered violence experience by women in ecoterritorial struggles in Peru. Centering women in the defense of their
Teresa shared these thoughts with me as we waited for the arrival of taxis taking them to Lima’s airport. Teresa and several compañeras from their organization had been invited guests to the launch which had been held the evening prior at the Centro Cultural de España (Spain Cultural Center). The event’s location was a testament, albeit ironic, to the aid supplied by the Spanish government to the NGOs supporting defensoras’ activism.

Outside the modest hotel where they had been lodged for the past three nights, already with luggage on the sidewalk, and impatient about the tardiness of a couple of compañeras, Teresa responded to my question about the book launch. She began by telling me that this book was a good thing, but soon commented how interesting she had found the testimonios of other defensoras from Cajamarca who had spoken up last night. The defensoras who related their vivencias at the launch had done so after the panelists concluded their presentations and the floor was opened for questions. Teresa had been struck by her compañeras’ re-telling of events in that space. Teresa did not explain to me what about the narratives was striking except that they appeared to contrast with the narratives these compañeras told immediately following the conflict five years prior. That there was a difference in what the compañeras were relating to the audience and panelists gestures toward the function of testimonios on a large scale. What defensoras’ testimonies were in the period immediately following the conflict turned into testimonios that were narrativized with specific audiences in mind. Whereas soon after their experiences defensoras may have offered testimonies to communicate events that transpired, in the time since their occurrence, defensoras have grown into an awareness that allows them to contextualize their positionality into an accounting of what took place. The space of the book territories, Silva Santisteban profiles several well-known cases and presents defensoras’ perspectives from their varied positions in these movements.
launch at the Centro Cultural provided a public platform for defensoras to perform their testimonios as political accounts.

Teresa continued by telling me that when the most conflictive years of the struggle took place, there were a considerable number of outsiders, many of them foreigners, who came to Cajamarca to interview activists. Once those researchers left, others would follow seeking similar information about the conflict. Teresa mentioned that though some of those researchers and journalists had written texts that were eventually published and on occasion made their way back to the defenders, something like this book had never been done. Teresa specified that this book stood out from the rest: it was different because it included defensoras’ narratives. Teresa remarked, “nosotras no escribimos sobre esto, sobre lo que hemos pasado.” (We don’t write about this, about what we’ve been through.) I nodded, chiming in that only a small number of researchers considered the gendered nature of extractive struggles. Teresa corrected my interpretation emphasizing that it was rather the content of the book that differed from previous publications. Silva Santisteban’s book appeared to allow us (a specific public) to behold, in the form of a published text, their stories—their testimonios.

Teresa’s observations lead me back to the question at the feminist meeting in Lima: How do we systematize what we’ve lived? Many defensoras perceive the publication of written text as an important mechanism for documenting their testimonios. Silva Santisteban’s book is not, however, solely a record of defensoras’ testimonios even if it includes their narratives. Silva Santisteban (2017) provides an analysis of violence against defensoras that incorporates their narratives. Silva Santisteban aims foremost at providing a paradigmatic interpretation about the gendered workings of power that harm women during conflicts. This aim limits what the book can do as a record of women’s vivencias in these struggles. Some of these limitations emerge
from the form of the text, since the book’s structure was likely largely determined by Silva Santistebean. It is unclear how much input defensoras had regarding the book’s structure and content, or if this option was offered to them. The politics of inclusion is determined by the writers’ judgment – a situation academics likewise enter. Thus, the inclusion of defensoras’ voices in Silva Santistebean’s account is still restricted; some voices remain excluded. Still, I noted that Teresa was thanked in the book’s acknowledgments, which led me to infer that Silva Santistebean had consulted with Teresa at some juncture in her writing. Because publishing a work of testimonios may not have been Silva Santistebean’s intention, it is perhaps incidental to discuss this point. What is important to highlight is that there is something about the book’s publication that resonated with Teresa. Despite my reservations about its place as a work of testimonios, the book created space for the vivencias of Cajamarcan defensoras to become visible.

When I expressed to Teresa that I thought it was indispensable to invite defensoras as panelists at these forums, she agreed. However, she added that sometimes these events tend to be too “organizados” (organized). By ‘organized’ Teresa meant that the events were NGO-ified. This descriptor was a reference to the fact that external organizations (NGOs) were the ones who authored the events. NGOs held the power to organize how the meetings took place. Thus, defensorxs were invited only to attend the event, but not necessarily to have a say in its design. Since the start of the struggle, defensoras have become familiar with the array of working groups, summits, and forums organized by NGOs in which international government and regulatory entities are invited to meet with ecoterritorial activists. The tone and structure of those meetings are specifically directed at the international guests representing bodies like the UN, EU, and IACHR, among others. The book launch, however, had been directed at a multiplicity of
publics in an audience which included defensorxs, academics, journalists, and NGO staff.

Teresa’s point about the NGO organizational dimension of these events was driven home to me when she offered her opinion of the most outstanding moment. Whereas I had appreciated the panel for featuring two well-known defensoras who are protagonists in the book, Teresa was grateful to María Isabel Cedano, one of the panelists, for recognizing the defensoras by asking them to stand up and requesting applause from the rest of the audience.

To understand why the recognition afforded by Cedano’s gesture meant more to Teresa than an invitation to participate in a forum brings us back to the testimonio genre. Cedano was recognizing defensoras for who they were, what they embodied, and the vivencias they held. The defensoras present in the audience stood for an unmediated representation of all that has been inscribed on their bodies, something that in no uncertain terms that is part of their repertoire of struggle. Testimonios are not unmediated, but, unlike the organized events by NGOs, they bring us closer to a narrativized text which defensoras have more power over shaping. “Yes,” Teresa had replied to my question, Silva Santisteban’s book was a good thing because it had included the words of the compañeras; yet, authorial power had belonged to one individual who constructed the larger story. In this respect, this dissertation does not depart from Silva Santisteban’s volume. The requirements of the academy restrict collaborative engagement in a dissertation’s publication. What might it look like to allow our collaborators their due authorial role in an academic text? Mere inclusion is not enough, even if it is a step toward making space for the “voices” of subjugated persons.

My inclusion of defensoras’ testimonios in this dissertation is a decolonial move. It signals the taken-for-grantedness in the academy of the right to be heard which, according to the terms of the academy’s epistemic tautology, is to be written down. (And also a fundamental
commonality shared by disciplines.) Scholarship is by and large cemented through the reams of paper-turned-documents that literally and figuratively represent knowledge. Is there some existential truth that we are seeking in committing to writing the product of our research inquiries? Or do we write out of convention, from disciplinary inertia? Pushing these questions to the background for the time being, I turn to the distinctly public and popularized polemic of Rigoberta Menchú’s testimonio to begin a discussion that situates the profiles of the defensoras I present in this chapter. My focus is not on Mechú’s testimonio itself, since an oversaturated field of debate on the subject (object) already exists, having been hashed out by academics across disciplines in the 1990s and early 2000s (Stoll 1999; Arias 2001). Rather, I am interested in examining the polemic’s meaning and effects to better contextualize the significance of testimonio as a research method and theoretical framework.

The controversy around *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* revolved around two main notions: authority and representation. For my treatment of women’s political histories in this chapter, the question of authority is of most consequence. As literary scholar John Beverley noted in his (perhaps) final determination on the debate, the Rigoberta Menchú polemic was a “battle over knowledge” (2004, 4). The controversy about Menchú’s testimonio was set off by an anthropologist’s “discovery” of alternative facts.  

“Alternative facts” should not be taken at face value, and I introduce it mostly in a satirical sense. However, if taken at face value, my qualifying Stoll’s truth claims as “alternative facts” is justified in a world (such as our present one) where there exists legitimacy in something termed “alternative facts.” Taking this qualification at face value is a double move that both acknowledges a world that harbors the existence of alternative facts, while simultaneously rejecting such a possibility (as proven the by various sectors of U.S. society that spurned the phrase). In this paradoxical double move, I subordinate Stoll’s “fact-based” claims to Menchú’s truth by labeling Stoll’s assertions the alternative facts, rather than Menchú’s testimonio. To be sure, this is a dangerous semantic game, for I do not wish to actually enable the continued use of the phrase nor to promote the fascist origins of “alternative facts.” Nevertheless, if not taken at face value, then my re-appropriation of the phrase serves purposes that its authors certainly would not have imagined nor condoned. This state of affairs would—ironically—open up space for plural truths to co-exist. As a re-appropriated phrase, “alternative facts” permits a critique of dominant western ontologies. I entertain its re-appropriation precisely because it allows an ironic interrogation to the positionality of western epistemologies from the position of marginalized indigenous and mestiza women, something U.S.
challenge to Menchú’s story hinged on questioning the veracity of the events she told. Stoll’s research indicated that there were details Menchú omitted in her account and that the events she recounted were crafted in a manner that arguably misrepresented the truth—that is to say, what really happened. Testimonio, then, was put on the bench, to be scrutinized, interrogated, rendering its position as a legitimate form of historical ac/recounting up for judgment.

The epistemological battle that ensued from Stoll’s publications—which, ironically, seemed to be overwhelmingly entrenched in academic spaces—succeeded in revealing that what was fundamentally at stake by the positionality of the genre was authority over knowledge-production. Testimonio’s legitimacy decentered the position of scholars whose raison-d’être depends on acknowledgment of their credentials as experts on specialized subject matter. In proposing that testimonio may easily complement scientific inquiry, Beverley asserts that testimonio owes its transgressive nature to its capacity to relativize academic knowledge: testimonio’s truth contends with the truth of the academy (2004, 6). Isabel Dulfano (2004) takes a similar perspective on the debate and extends the criticism on the academy to argue that the controversy was more about the insecurities of academics than about the veracity of the events-as-told by Menchú. The polemic reflected the anxieties of a frustrated academic left at crisis with the political identity it had come to believe about itself (Dulfano 2004, 84). Thus, if their own work was incapable of having the political effects academics had envisioned, how could testimonio be thus triumphant? Importantly, Dulfano also reminds us that Stoll’s motive to re-center the academic was an effort to re-center not just any academic, but the “white, upper class, male, empirical (anthropologist)” (2004, 88). Was there something, then, about testimonios being

Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway did not intend when she coined the phrase. As a countermove to its original use, re-appropriation accepts the proposition that multiple, contradictory facts may co-exist because the result is the destabilization of epistemological structures that emanated from the supremacy of white, male Europeans.
primarily protagonized by women from Third World that made the “genre” susceptible to such particular critique and attack?

By way of returning to my earlier questions about the motivations driving academics’ compulsion to write, I argue that the polemic of Menchú’s testimonio reveals certain insecurities of the academy. Perhaps the truth that is sought is not only the confirmation that our place in the academy is justified, but also that we therefore do have authority to write what we are writing. The tautological nature of scholarly publication in the academy seems to suggest as much since the publication of peer-reviewed written texts codifies and validates the legitimacy of scientific knowledge (as truth). (We must have authority over our research subject because we were published, and we are published because we hold authority in the published matter.) So, these insecurities are based on maintaining a monopoly over authority and knowledge.

Testimonio, a hard-to-define genre (fiction or non-fiction?), has been predominantly adopted by subaltern women as a mode of expression. Testimonios overwhelmingly reflect women’s accounts (Maier and Dulfano 2004, 81). Kathryn Smith (2010) accounts for subjugated women’s adoption of testimonio as a form of resistance to two institutionalized patriarchal orderings: militarized repression and male revolutionaries. Smith argues, “What is so key to testimonio is the way in which testimonial writers use the written word as their weapon against patriarchy. Testimonio is so powerful of a medium because it attacks institutions and governments at a practical and a theoretical level” (2010, 26). What I would add to this is that a complementary patriarchal institution that is also attacked is the academy, at both a practical and theoretical level. No wonder, then, we have Stoll’s campaign against Menchú. Yet, trying to define testimonio as fiction or non-fiction, part of what occupied debates surrounding the Menchú controversy, implies entering a dialogue in the terms of the academy. Smith fittingly
As an epistemological theoretical framework, testimonio asserts itself as a legitimate site of knowledge production. It solicits recognition of organic intellectuals’ capacity to understand, interpret, and make sense of their experiences. The Latina Feminist Group (2001), a collective of feminist Latina intellectuals which formed in the 1990s, turned to testimonio as they attempted to theorize the complexities of Latina identity. In referring to herself as an “organic intellectual,” Aurora Levins Morales, one of the Group’s members, critiques the academy’s valuation of knowledge, re-claiming space for the intellectual value of experiential and local knowledge (2001, 27). She suggests that local knowledge is made fit for mass-consumption in universities or public spheres (as marketized knowledge) only when processed in the academy through the publication of academic books and articles. Thus, even Latina academics’ intellect must be processed (turned into high theory) before it is adopted as a legitimate form of knowledge (Levins Morales 2001, 29). The scholar is not-so-subtly called out in her role as part of the structure that invalidates Latinas’ unmediated capacity to create knowledge about the conditions of their existence, let alone their oppression. By conceptualizing women of color’s position as...
organic intellectuals, the Latina Feminist Group brings to the fore tensions between the academy and non-academic intellectualism.

The question that follows is, if testimonio allows women of color and marginalized peoples to speak, does the recognition afforded by being heard (read) preclude testimonio’s capacity to challenge the hegemonic structures of women’s oppression? This question is a direct engagement of Gayatri Spivak’s (1994) classic aporia: can the subaltern speak? For what concerns us in this chapter, I turn the question into: if a testimonio is “heard,” is it still of the subaltern, subjugated, or marginalized person?

I look to the testimonio of Domitila Barrios de Chungara, aptly titled ‘Si me permiten hablar...’ Testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia (Let Me Speak! Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines), to begin addressing this question. Barrios de Chungara, activist and wife of a tin miner, became a central leading figure in the labor rights movements for mine workers and their families in Bolivia in the 1960s and 1970s. The testimonio was drafted, compiled, and constructed in collaboration with her interlocutor, Moema Viezzer. Barrios de Chungara considered the testimonio’s publication a “culmination” of the work done at the 1975 UN International Women’s Year Tribunal in Mexico City where she met Viezzer. The testimonio’s initial publication generated some critique—akin to what Menchú’s spawned—and Barrios de Chungara found it necessary to request the publisher to allow her to speak back to those comments through a preface for the 1978 edition. There, Barrios de Chungara explained in an interview with Viezzer that the testimonio was to comprehended as a whole and parts were not to be taken out of context. Moreover, she wished to clear up, once and for all, that she was aware of what the text said and she authorized to be published as such.
In Viezzer’s note to the reader, she mentions that few written records exist “a partir de experiencias vividas por gente del pueblo” (originating from the lived experiences of the people) (1991, 2; emphasis added). This crucial point attests to how testimonio emerges from a space that is separate from, if not external to, written texts from the academy. In the 1978 interview, Barrios de Chungara emphasizes that she is telling her story and not claiming it as the definite account of a group of people, but that she also thinks “que este relato puede ser un texto para análisis y crítica, pero no se trata de buscar en él un lineamiento teórico en sí. Es un relato de mi experiencia” (7). Barrios de Chungara was precise in reminding critics that she had not meant to offer a historical or social analysis of the Bolivian mining, but that the text could still provide space for pause and reflection, most of all for other communities in similar struggles. More than four decades after Barrios de Chungara’s testimonio was published, women participating in ecoterritorial struggles still emphasize the need for documentation of their struggle and the importance of voicing their vivencias.

If this is the case, and if we also take Teresa’s observation seriously, then where does this leave us with regard to Spivak’s claims? Why was Barrios de Chungara so determined to speak up in a space similarly “organized” as the kind my collaborators frequent? From Spivak we may glean that the politics of the subaltern are insurgent and therefore not legible through hegemonic (colonial) frameworks of interpretation. I follow Ahmed’s (2017) redux of Spivak, where Ahmed states that the subaltern woman “does not speak to us directly through the archives provided by folklore and fables. Perhaps her arm speaks. Even then the arm cannot be understood as testimony. If we hear arms, we do so only through other limbs” (2017, 80). Here, Ahmed also coincides with Taylor’s conceptualization of the repertoire. We might, thus, acknowledge that

14 “That this account might be a text for analysis and critique, but the point is not to find a theoretical line in itself. It is an account of my experience.”
the subaltern does speak, but what she is saying (perhaps her insurgent politics) will never be heard through hegemonic channels. The academy does not have the capacity to comprehend an arm speaking because the arm speaks in a counterhegemonic voice. So, perhaps, Spivak is right to the extent that we cannot hear the subaltern if we are listening using hegemonic Eurocentric epistemes. This, however, does not negate the significance of testimonios, especially when defensoras are articulating with dominant epistemological systems. Testimonios use a knowledge currency that produces visibility, and this would seem to be enough reason for defensoras to engage in it.

I prefer to ultimately consult the authority of defensoras. My collaborators wish for their stories to be known. They consented to have me record their testimonios “para que sepan” (so that [you/they] know) wherever I take their accounts. Testimonio does not pretend to be History, but it is truth and it contains knowledge. The question of voice remains unresolved, but these narratives are no less meaningful because of it. In the testimonios that follow, I choose to push ideas about voice by underscoring, rather than screening, my position as interlocutor and drawing attention to interpretation, and my part as ethnographer, as a vital dimension to rendering the spoken word into writing. Therefore, my intervention in the texts is more involved than Viezzer’s was with Barrios de Chungara and Burgos-Debray with Menchú. I neither pretend to represent nor speak for my collaborators, but my role is not simply that of an editor. The following testimonios demonstrate my attempt to integrate my voice, as interlocutor, with that of the defensoras who narrate their histories. This is a co-produced text, done in the spirit of Barrios de Chungara’s encouraging words: “creo que es necesario integrar a los intelectuales con
nosotros. Porque nosotros no queremos hacer nuestra lucha apartada, los obreros y campesinos nomás, sino que tiene que estar la gente intelectual” (Viezzer 1991, 7).15

15 “I think it is necessary to integrate intellectuals with us. Because we do not want to make our struggle apart, only workers and farmers, but intellectuals [also] need to be there.”
Conclusion

“¿Cómo Vamos a Vivir Sin Agua?”
(How Will We Live Without Water?)

“Water is life” say Water Protectors on Turtle Island. The defensoras of life, Pachamama, human rights, and water in Cajamarca agree. Much like the great Oceti Sakowin Camp at Standing Rock in 2016-2017, defenders in Cajamarca camped out near Conga during the first years of the struggle to protect the lakes that were threatened by the mining project. They called themselves “Guardianes de las lagunas” (Guardians of the lakes).

Guardianship. Protection. Defense. All these terms signify a common sentiment. What might this sentiment reflect about the global moment we are in, and the rejection of extractive capitalism for our collective survival?

I return to the beginning. In the introduction to this dissertation, I argued for seeing defensorxs’ politics and praxis as a struggle for something and not a resistance movement. I thus

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1 The Seven Council Fires. A collective of seven Indigenous nations in the occupied territories of the United States. The term also translates to “council fire” (Estes 2019, 4).
understand the decolonial feminism of my collaborators as a *refusal* of the advancement of extractive capital. Carole McGranahan reminds us that refusal is not resistance, “instead, refusal is critique” (2016, 322). Refusal is also about rejection; rejecting the way things are. An act of rejection inherently suggests possibility because rejection cannot occur if we are still bridled by hegemonic ideologies that do not allow us to see beyond our life conditions. This is why refusal is generative. According to McGranahan, refusal “continually appear[s] in the present moment as creative and potent” (323). If we apprehend refusal as part of how we appear in the present moment—in the here and now—at work, at home, and in society, then defensoras are enacting refusal in the ways they show up daily in the extractive frontier.

I agree with McGranahan’s observation that refusal can exist in spaces outside of relations of domination, but, even then, deeper reflection might reveal how interlocking systems of oppression shape much of what might compel people to refuse. For this reason it is vital to understand extractivism as a heteropatriarchal racial regime of power. My collaborators know this from experience; from the way their bodies are inscribed and subjected by the forces of global capitalism. To refuse the mine, is to refuse masculine domination, is to refuse labor precarity, is to refuse racialized exploitation, is to refuse. Therefore, conceptualizing ecoterritorial defense through the framework of *cuerpo territorio* implies the refusal of the coloniality of power and its various axes, including the colonial/modern gender system and capitalist patriarchal relations of domination.

Marisol de la Cadena (2010; 2015) posits that cosmopolitics indicate the recognition of a plurality of political worlds coexisting (a political pluriverse). Cosmopolitics, therefore, present the possibility of rupturing modern/colonial ontological paradigms currently defining the scope and nature of “politics.” In this political topography, articulation is only “partial,” where
understandings between differently positioned actors is incomplete due to ontological alterity. De la Cadena contends that this does not obviate articulation and that, actually, a consciousness recognizing multiple coexisting universes transforms the modern/colonial political episteme. Furthermore, de la Cadena tells us that the recognition of the Pachamama and the rights of Nature in the constitutions of various Latin American nation-states “is not a paradigmatic shift in the history of indigenous resistance…[because] the excess has always been present” (2010, 348). De la Cadena is, perhaps, inadvertently gesturing toward conceiving decolonial politics as something other than resistance. For First Nations, Native Americans, and other Indigenous communities of the Americas the “excess” has always been there. But these modes of “excess” can also be emergent.

Refusal has the potential to generate excess by bypassing and rejecting hegemonic terms of engagement and the engagement itself. The broader ecoterritorial struggle in Cajamarca rejects modernity/coloniality by advocating and promoting economic alternatives to “development.” In other words, defenders are not interested in making extractivism sustainable, nor in the social redistribution of its profits. They reject the extractive economic model altogether. The co-op, which my collaborators in Celendín finally established in 2018, is one way of rejecting extractive capitalism. Defensoras’ assertion of autonomy in their daily lives also enacts a counter-hegemonic politics of refusal (and ecoterritoriality) that exceeds the structures of heteropatriarchal capitalist domination. Refusal emerges as “critique” (McGranahan 2016) in defensoras’ daily acts of autonomy. Defensoras reject machismo by subverting the restraints on their movement and time. The terms of livelihood and survival under labor precarity and material insecurity are also rejected when women hustle, make do, and prioritize relational

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2 My collaborators in Cajamarca have also formed their own informal co-op, where they produce tea and soap.
existence through autonomous practices. And so we might ask ourselves, what kind of power comes from the force of rejection rather than revolution?

**Horizons, Horizontality: The Power of Refusal**

My collaborators’ refusal is transgressive. José Esteban Muñoz, in advocating for critical utopianism, stated: “queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (2009, 1). I have often thought of luchadoras’ political praxis as critically queer. In future work, I hope to write about other forms of feminine/feminist solidarity practiced by my collaborators that queered heteronormative sociality in Cajamarca. For the time being, I say only that their practices of solidarity are at the very least a critique of (neo)liberal machista socio-economic structures. I call this solidarity “sororidad” (women’s solidarity), following its use by the NGOs supporting defensoras. *Sororidad* rests on entrusting care for one another through mutual acts of respect, understanding, and solidarity. I witnessed how what had started as the cultivation of women’s solidarity in response to gendered political violence gradually turned into caring for each other’s well-being by providing emotional outlets in community. As defensoras come together in women-only spaces they form bonds of unity that cement solidarity across material, spatial, and social terrains and through time. Sororidad, therefore, represents a radical politics of care in the form of communal care.

Communal care and caretaking as a politics is counter hegemonic. Dakota activist-scholar Kim TallBear delineates this positioning.

The Standing Rock movement continues the momentum of Indigenous and other women-led social and environmental movements. As a Dakota, one way I interpret these
movements is as caretaking kin, but I must clarify this designation. First, I use *kin* in
ways that contradict patriarchal White settler ideas of it. Second, although I see women-
led movements as caretaking, I do not view caretaking as the sole domain of cisgendered,
biologically-reproductive women. Nor do I view women as being the only members of
our communities who caretake. Men and gender-nonconforming people, and brave youth
(who deserve particular recognition) also help caretake our peoples, make relations, and
add to our collective strength. (2016)

TallBear acknowledges that under the modern/colonial gender system, caretaking has been
feminized. However, caretaking can and must be included and embraced in the rejection of the
individualist ideologies of heteronormative global capitalism. My collaborators, too, embraced
their roles as caretakers in relation to their kin and to their cuerpo territorio. Their defense and
protection of Cajamarca’s headwaters is part and parcel of caretaking. Rejecting extractivism is
fundamentally rooted in caring for their offspring and the kin that will inherit the world after
them.

“Our lands, and lives, were targeted not because they held precious resources or labor to
be extracted. In fact, the opposite was true: our lands and lives were targeted and held
value because they could be wasted—submerged, destroyed.” -Nick Estes, *Our History is
Our Future*

Indigenous struggles operate from an ontology that already conceives of territory as
cuerpo territorio. The Native nations of the Americas understand the connection between land
and bodies and between their struggles and the struggles of other marginalized populations (e.g.,
#BlackLivesMatter, #FreePalestine, #NoDAPL, #DefensorasNoEstanSolas) that have been
historically subjugated in the modern matrix of coloniality. It is not coincidental that the
machinations of the coloniality of power are bound up in settler colonialism since the domination of the cuerpo territorio implies severing connections to the land (Estes 2019, 10).

Ultimately, my research is concerned with answering Lugones’s (2007) call to reject complicity with the “modern gender colonial system” by attesting to how race, heterosexualism, and capitalism articulate to oppress groups in the peripheries. In locating my research at the juncture of feminist critique and decolonial praxis, I am also contending that these are vital perspectives for ethical scholarship. Connecting the gendered, anti-imperialist, and indigenous knowledges at the extractive frontier grounds feminist decolonial theorization in the gendered politics of territoriality. Defensoras’ politicization and participation in anti-extractivist struggles affirm that in any liberation struggle the axes of the coloniality of power must be understood as inseparable parts. The effects of defensoras’ daily acts of autonomy ripple outward into their social and political context—remapping the terrain of struggle. The excesses of their politics also interrupt and dislodge modern/colonial political epistemes. My research points us to the latent power of their accumulating decolonial feminist practices.
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