

# Patriarchy and progressive politics: gendered resistance to mining through everyday social relations of state formation in Intag, Ecuador

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## Abstract

Over the last decade, the Ecuadorian government, following regional trends, called for social and environmental progress through state-controlled resource extraction. Scholars have demonstrated that this neo-extractive model warranted further investigation regarding its progressive aims. Specifically, this paper examines gendered critiques of state-led extractivism linked to expanding governmental and social programs. Even as women asserted their political recognition and rights in state politics, they still confronted patriarchal relations in their everyday lives. Drawing on eight months of ethnographic research over 6 years in *campesino* communities of Junín and Chalguyacu Alto, I argue that women in Intag challenged patriarchal state relations of extractive capitalism. This paper offers a novel contribution to literature on neo-extractivism and gendered forms of resistance. Women held the state accountable for its promises of social welfare and infrastructural development through which it generated public support for controversial mineral projects. These symbols of state paternalism revealed expanded patriarchal structures that underpinned their daily lives, with significance for a gendered politics of resistance.

## Keywords

Ecuador, gendered resistance, neo-extraction, patriarchy, social reproduction

## Patriarcado y política progresista: resistencia de género a la minería a través de las relaciones sociales cotidianas de formación del estado en Intag, Ecuador

## Resumen

Durante la última década, el gobierno ecuatoriano, siguiendo las tendencias regionales, pidió progreso social y ambiental a través de la extracción de recursos controlada por el estado. Los académicos han demostrado que este modelo neo-extractivo justificaba una mayor investigación sobre sus objetivos progresivos. Específicamente, este artículo examina las críticas de género del extractivismo dirigido por el estado y vinculado a la expansión de los programas gubernamentales y sociales. Aun cuando las mujeres afirmaron su reconocimiento político y sus derechos en la política estatal, siguieron confrontando las relaciones patriarcales en sus vidas cotidianas. Basándome en ocho meses de investigación etnográfica durante seis años en comunidades campesinas de Junín y Chalguyacu Alto, sostengo que las mujeres en Intag desafiaron las relaciones estatales patriarcales del capitalismo extractivo. Este artículo ofrece una novedosa contribución a la literatura sobre neo-extractivismo y formas de resistencia de género. Las mujeres responsabilizaron al estado por sus promesas de bienestar social y desarrollo de infraestructura a través de las cuales generó apoyo público para proyectos minerales controvertidos. Estos símbolos del paternalismo estatal revelaron estructuras patriarcales expandidas que apuntalaron sus vidas cotidianas, con importancia para una política de resistencia de género.

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## Palabras clave

Resistencia de género, patriarcado, reproducción social, neoextracción, Ecuador

## Introduction

In July 2018, I attended a presentation of results of 3 years of community water monitoring by the municipal government of Cotacachi in Intag, Ecuador. Located in the western most part of the province of Imbabura in Ecuador, the Intag Valley is remote and relatively unknown to Ecuadorians and foreigners alike. Yet, the region is well known by antimining collectives and those who participate in antiextractivism activity inside and outside of Ecuador.

*Campesinos* from the communities of Junín and Chalguyacu Alto, with support of the municipal government and foreign researchers, had gathered bimonthly water samples in the communities' once-protected ecoreserve. Water monitoring documented the impacts of exploratory copper and molybdenum mining conducted by the state mining company, *Empresa Nacional de Minería* (ENAMI), together with the Chilean state company, *Corporación Nacional de Cobre* (CODELCO). The companies operate the concession known as Llurimagua that encompasses the ecoreserve. Change in coloration of rocks below a waterfall, a destination for community-led tourism, fueled fears of water contamination. The results presented in the meeting established a baseline as mining exploration moved forward in the reserve. Preliminary testing illustrated increased acidity levels (pH); an increase in heavy metals; and an increase in water conductivity, a test of solid waste in the water.

Communities from the valley of Intag were invited to this meeting, where they listened to the presentation and glanced through a brochure that summarized the results. Following the presentation community members stood to voice their concern for mining—not just in the Llurimagua concession, but the risks of impacts from pending operations in concessions that now encompass the whole valley. Several residents wanted to organize and oppose the expansion of mining as they had done in the 1990s (D'Amico, 2012; Davidov, 2013, 2014). Others highlighted how former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's (2007–2017) public infrastructure projects—schools, roads, hospitals—were merely designed to convince people of the benefits of resource extraction (Gudynas, 2011).

In the midst of this antimining discourse, one long-standing promining resident stood and asked: “What can we do to resist when the company is already there? At the beginning, prior to the company's arrival, resistance was possible, but afterward, how?” These questions highlighted the bifurcation of left-leaning discourses in Ecuador (Fabricant and Gustafson, 2014). Many in the region were convinced by the offer of work with mining companies, informed by elite state discourses that suggested extractivism was linked to anti-imperialism and modernization. At the same time, several residents voiced their disagreement to these comments, arguing that “the protest

against mining is now 20-years-old—we came protesting the mine.” Others pointed out that the work offered by the company would not last long. Still others added, “remember that ENAMI arrived through a process of persecution of people, and if mining were beneficial, why is there such persecution? In Canada the Ecuadorian government is promoting Llurimagua! We've been resisting mining for 20 years!”

These exchanges illustrated the conundrum of sustaining an antimining movement in Intag in the context of state-led neo-extractivism. As Fabricant and Gustafson (2014) argued, for those on the right, promining discourse simply calls for increased extraction, but for those on the left who claim an antiextractivist position, the discourse is more complicated. Some might advocate for short-term economic gains of extraction and redistributive policies, just as others who make up the left pointed to the long-term social and environmental impacts of extraction. Specifically, the polarity of antimining debates obscured more complex arguments about shifting socioecological relationships that result from extraction. Therefore, Fabricant and Gustafson (2014) argued that we need to more clearly understand the “political economic transformations spurred by extractivism.” State-led, “progressive” extraction has complicated struggles and movements focused on socioecological relationships linked to gender, as well as race and ethnicity.

In this paper, I focus on women's voices to demonstrate how patriarchal relations are perpetuated through extractive relationships in Intag, Ecuador. I argue that through their embodied presences that confront paternalism in state spaces, women challenged patriarchal constructions of state-led, neo-extractivism in Intag. Even as women asserted their political recognition and rights in state politics, they still confronted patriarchal relations in their everyday lives. This paper offers a novel contribution to literature on neo-extractivism and gendered forms of resistance. It develops a gendered, decolonial analysis of everyday state formation as a site of resistance. First, women in Intag highlighted the paternalism associated with state-led extraction as a symbolic form of the patriarchal state. Second, women in Intag held the state accountable for infrastructural and social welfare programs designed to generate public support for extractivism. In doing so, they confronted discourses of progress and modernization linked to extraction. Women demonstrated that gendered social reproduction revealed patriarchal relationships, with significance for a politics of resistance.

## Gender, patriarchy, and everyday resistance to state-led extractive capitalism

A growing body of scholarship focused on gender and resistance in extractive industries illustrates that women and men

are impacted differently in resource struggles. These gendered assessments tend to begin with the crucial role women play in households, families, livelihoods, and as protectors of the environment. Gendered roles attuned women to the environmental and human health impacts of extractive development (Bell, 2013; Jenkins, 2015, 2017; Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Li, 2009). Women are guardians of the environment, and they illustrate a desire to protect the environment for future generations (Bell, 2013; Jenkins, 2015, 2017). They use their bodies on the frontlines, confronting exploitation in extractive industries, and in turn recognizing gendered inequities in their own societies (Deonandan and Tatham, 2016). Women have formed women-only antimining organizations, such as the *Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama* in Ecuador, a space where women created their own gendered narratives and critiques of extraction (Velásquez, 2017).

These studies demonstrated that gender must remain a focus of struggle within extractive industries. Women are empowered by asserting their political recognition and representation, yet these outcomes risk “romanticizing” their role, overlooking the realities of women’s everyday lives (Deonandan and Tatham, 2016: 276). Even as women are attuned to and protest the impacts of extractivism, they still confront patriarchal relations, racialization, and poverty in their daily lives (Deonandan and Tatham, 2016). Therefore, gendered resistance to extraction must also grapple with these intersectional structures and systems that situate women differently in the environmental sphere.

Scholars have illustrated how women are calling attention to neo-colonial relationships of extractive capitalism in Latin America. These studies highlighted how capital intersects with patriarchy and other oppressive forces to marginalize women (Muñoz and Villarreal, 2019; Schild, 2019). Scholars have focused on intersectional practices, theories of decolonial resistance, and social reproduction, to illustrate how women articulate the racialized, gendered work of neoliberal extractivism (Hernández Reyes, 2019; Mason-Deese, 2016; Motta, 2013; Motta and Seppälä, 2016; Velásquez, 2017).

Scholarship has demonstrated that women have proposed alternative development models outside of capitalist, patriarchal relations (Beltrán, 2017; Fernandes, 2018) drawing on women’s knowledge and roles as environmental protectors (Sempértegui, 2019; Svampa, 2015; Ulloa, 2016). Specifically, women activists have used the concept of “body as territory” rooted in the individual and collective knowledges of women situated in territories in the Global South (Cabnal, 2012; Zaragocin et al., 2018).

Building on critical, gendered critiques of extractivism, I illustrate how *campesinas* in Intag have confronted patriarchal state relationships in Ecuador. In doing so, they challenged extractive logics of capital configured through everyday state spaces. This paper contributes an ethnographic analysis that examines the state as a social and political institution through which human–nature relations are

shaped, producing gendered inequality and patterns of production and consumption (see Vallejo et al., 2019). Pearson and Crane (2017) have argued for feminist political geographical analyses of the Latin American state that emphasize everyday struggles over social reproduction. In the current political context, the collapse of progressive or left-leaning governments in Latin America illustrates what some have called an “end of cycle” (Modonesi, 2015; Zibechi, 2016: 23). Yet, analyses of everyday spaces of social reproduction revealed sites through which to understand the “fragile, contingent geography of state power” (Pearson and Crane, 2017: 188). Therefore, this paper draws on decolonial feminist scholarship (Hernández Reyes, 2019; Motta, 2013; Motta and Seppälä, 2016) to foreground *campesina* voices as subjects of resistance, rather than objects of study, where women’s everyday, embodied experiences illustrate state formation. Women challenged elite, paternalistic state discourses that linked extraction to social reproduction. They understood their own embodied social reproduction in relation to state authority, which also informed their ability to protest patriarchal systems that underpinned their everyday lives.

## Methods

Designed as an institutional ethnography of the Ecuadorian state, this project focused on everyday social relations that constituted state formation (Billo and Mountz, 2016; Smith, 1987). I began field research in Intag in 2013 and conducted 8 months of research in the region over the last 6 years. This paper draws primarily on research conducted from 2016 to 2018. Rather than interviewing elites who occupied state offices (where accessing state officials was difficult, if not impossible), I relied on participant observation and interviews in communities to focus on people’s everyday lives in spaces of extraction. I traveled by bus through the valley of Intag to attend meetings with community members. I also completed 13 semistructured interviews with community activists in Intag. In Quito, I interviewed a lawyer representing antimining communities in Intag and members of the *Defensoria del Pueblo*, the government ombudsman office.

During periods of field research, I lived with residents in Junín and Chaguayacu Alto who self-identified as *ecologistas* (ecologists). Over the last decade, Intag has had a foreign human rights observer volunteering and living in the region. I collaborated closely with this individual during my field research. This volunteer coordinated community water monitoring, attended community meetings, and facilitated communication of photos and reports between community members, antimining municipal government officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGO). I also participated in meetings and workshops with NGOs, including *Acción Ecológica* and *Defensa y Conservación Ecológica de Intag* (DECOIN) in their offices in Quito or in Intag, respectively.

While conducting semistructured interviews with women, I was sometimes invited into private spaces of their homes. In these conversations I learned to listen to ways women recounted their gendered roles in their families, while we cooked together, shared meals, and generally cared for each other. Building on decolonial feminist scholarship (Mason-Deese, 2016; Motta and Seppälä, 2016), I suggest that listening was also a form of social reproduction. In these conversations I became more attuned to the ways in which women at once refused to participate in masculine, patriarchal state constructions premised on extraction, while also illustrating how their own gendered, everyday lives upheld and recirculated categories through which the state is given form (Billo and Mountz, 2016; Pearson and Crane, 2017). I listened to women's stories of their families through which I came to understand intergenerational, gendered social reproduction that disrupted masculine, patriarchal state relationships. Women constructed spaces where they engaged with and cared for each other, linking lived experiences with collective liberation.

### *Gender, resistance, and environmentalism in Intag*

From its inception, opposition to extraction in Intag was built through transnational alliances, what Davidov (2013: 294) argued “led to a state-oppositional environmentality.” Intag’s history of resistance to mining was built around protection of the environment and an ecologist identity. In 2002, supported by the municipal government, the county of Cotacachi that encompasses Intag was declared an ecological county, banning mining (Davidov, 2014; Kuecker, 2007). Economic development would be built on several ecological cooperatives, including coffee and ecotourism. Junín, together with DECOIN, developed a community-managed ecoreserve and lodge. The latter is maintained and managed by women who have refused employment with the mines. In the 1990s and early 2000s, residents of Junín and Chalguyacu Alto successfully resisted two private, foreign mining firms, Bishi Metals and Ascendant Copper (now Copper Mesa). The latter company’s arrival in Intag was accompanied by paramilitaries. Following residents’ dismantling of the mining camp and holding paramilitaries in Junín’s church, the Ecuadorian government ended the concession agreement with the Canadian company. The specific territories, social relationships, materialities, and temporalities of Intag informed state formation (Davidov, 2013, Davidov, 2014).

When President Correa was elected in 2007, he referred to environmental activists in Ecuador as “infantile ecologists” linking environmentalism to colonialism and imperialism. He argued that “outsiders” influenced local communities, intent on infusing them with anti-mining politics. State power and authority was asserted through the criminalization of residents linked to transnational movements and environmentalism more broadly (Billo and Zukowski, 2015; Kuecker, 2007; Moore and Velásquez, 2012; Svampa, 2015).

In Intag, relationships of production and social reproduction are gendered and intergenerational. Women are not just working in home spaces. They participate in social networks of environmental resistance, developing knowledge of environmental impacts from mining. Doña Rosario, president of the ecotourism network, participated in the environmental movement from its inception. Her husband was killed in 1992 in an altercation over land seizures tied to the arrival of Ascendant Copper. More recently, her son, Javier Ramírez, spent 10 months in jail on charges that he threw a rock at an ENAMI truck. Another son had an arrest warrant in his name, also on charges of protesting ENAMI. Only recently was the warrant lifted by the national government. Doña Rosario told me in a conversation in 2018: “We have to continue to fight. It’s not good just for us (our family), but for all.” She emphasized: “We’re always here, protesting.”

Conversations with women illustrated how they built relationships with each other through forms of resistance. Doña Rosario commented that during the time of Ascendant Copper and Bishi Metals, community members would communicate to let each other know when the company was arriving along the road to Junín, running to set up roadblocks. Now, though, she said ENAMI attempted to engage in processes of “socialization,” going house to house to convince people of the mine, intervening in communities’ shared histories and state-oppositional knowledges.

In 2017 in Chalguyacu Alto, I interviewed Marcia Ramírez, a long-standing leader in the resistance movement. Her parents, as well as her aunt, Doña Rosario, participated in early antimining efforts. She learned from them about the potential impacts of the mine and how to defend the communities against private companies. As a child, she participated in meetings and workshops with her parents. Initially, men worked for the mining company, seeking opportunities for wage labor. Yet, when the company further exploited their labor, asking men to work longer hours, while cutting their wages, they began to question the benefits of mining. Around the same time, in 1995, DECOIN was formed, and together with Acción Ecológica, people began learning more about the impacts of mining. At this point, Marcia was 12 years old, and as she stated, “a majority of people in the community opposed mining.”

Marcia began her professional life working with a state agency on issues of family planning, traveling to communities in the region, sometimes providing emergency medical support. Eventually, she worked with DECOIN as a community organizer. She shared information about the impacts of mining, learned in part on a trip with Doña Rosario to Peru and Chile to see firsthand the impacts of extraction. When funding ran out for this organizer position, coinciding with state pressure to reduce support for and criminalize environmental organizations, Marcia had to seek out other work. She runs a small dry goods store out of her home.

During my field research, I had the opportunity to live in Marcia’s house, listening as she recounted stories about



resistance and everyday life. Our conversations would often shift to other aspects of her personal life. Marcia married later than many women in the community and has one daughter. She commented on this gendered difference, suggesting that marriage and family were never a priority for her. In fact, one boyfriend, she eventually learned, was interested in sharing secrets of resistance efforts to miners, which promptly ended the relationship. Happy in her current relationship, Marcia also lamented the gendered division of labor in household tasks, including cooking, washing clothes, and childcare. This work kept her much closer to home, while also adding a triple burden of labor, as she ran her dry goods store and also kept up on the politics of mining. Marcia's attention to gendered forms of social reproduction also extended into her work as a community organizer. She still participated in organizing meetings when possible, sometimes traveling to Quito to meet with state officials, as well as talking to student groups who traveled to the region to learn about resistance, and participating in water monitoring in the community ecoreserve (see below). Marcia, like Doña Rosario, said, "we're not standing around with our arms crossed, and yes, we're protesting everything."

Women were engaged in the daily work of understanding and constructing the sociospatial relationships that underpin their lives, demonstrating that "state/non-state distinctions" are "constructed" (see Pearson and Crane, 2017: 188). The everyday work of women in Intag tells stories of their intimate knowledge of what is needed to sustain their own and their families' lives in the space of their community. Access to food, education, and health care were all necessities that structured their daily lives. Specifically, women were attuned to the paternalism of social welfare that both supported their gendered social reproduction and brought them outside the home into spaces of resistance. They engaged in social reproduction that confronted their gendered roles as mothers and wives, while also illustrating how resistance restructured these roles.

### *Gendered spaces of extraction*

Rural communities are often seen as "obstacles" to the national gains from extraction (Fabricant and Gustafson, 2014). The community ecoreserve was legally accessed by national decree; Intag had been designated a national mining zone. Confronted with community-organized roadblocks in 2014, ENAMI entered with the support of police, criminalizing protestors, including former community president Javier Ramírez (Billo and Zukowski, 2015). The place of the ecoreserve and Intag, constructed through social relationships linked to land and environmental protection, was disrupted through discourses of development and progress tied to copper deposits (Davidov, 2014). Marcia said that now residents who resisted seemed to find themselves "two steps behind the state, rather than one step ahead." The community was responding to the state's agenda, rather than

setting the agenda as they had in earlier decades. Communities were now faced with paternalistic, exclusionary tactics of the neo-extractive state. Marcia told me: "We (communities) want development, just not what they (ENAMI/CODELCO) think is development." The space of Intag came to represent particular topographies of extraction. The ecoreserve was restructured and trails were no longer for tourists, but for the expanding industry. Residents now had to ask permission to enter the reserve, and on my latest research trip in 2018, the company had constructed a fence and locked gate (Figure 1), requiring that all visitors sign in before gaining access.

In Intag, wage labor has illustrated the complexity associated with a bifurcation of left-leaning antiextraction movements in Ecuador (see Fabricant and Gustafson, 2014). Opposition to extraction had to contend with those convinced by employment and its links to national state discourse of sovereignty, modernization, and progress (Moore and Velásquez, 2012). ENAMI operated the concession in name, and CODELCO conducted the day-to-day work. Ostensibly, "the state," embodied by ENAMI, oversaw all daily operations. In 2018, CODELCO employed 205 residents in manual labor jobs. Work with CODELCO attuned residents to capital accumulation and consumerism as wage laborers with access to more cash than they might have had when their livelihoods were tied to agricultural production. Young men earned up to \$800/month working for the company. Employees, however, had to pay for their own motorbike transportation into the concession, as well as food. Some residents employed by the company talked about saving money for their children to go to school outside the community; other younger men told me they immediately spent the money. Employment worked to strengthen and affirm state-based extraction by linking citizenship to consumption, facilitating the community's dispossession of land and territory.

Every couple of weeks, residents who still resisted the mine, conducted water monitoring in the community ecoreserve, now the area of the concession above the community. Supported by the antimining municipal government, I would often join the hikes in the reserve. Intag is a region where mining is not supposed to take place according to Ecuador's 2008 constitution. It's a source of water and includes species that are at risk of extinction, as well as primary forest (Davidov, 2014). Miners and mules dominated trails that were designed for tourists to gain access to the community-protected waterfalls. All mining employees traveled up to the region by motorbike, and what had once been the community's *mirador* or viewpoint across the valley was now a parking lot for motorbikes (Figure 2). Twelve men were needed to carry the drilling motors up the hillside to drilling platforms. We often had to move aside on the trail for mule trains hauling equipment for miners. Rather than the silence of an ecoreserve filled with birds and other wildlife, a slow, steady hum of motors permeated the space. These



**Figure 1.** Registering with the company to access the community ecoreserve via a locked gate.

motors marked different drilling sites, as the company engaged in its expanding exploratory operations.

Employees knew very little about the larger vision or impacts of company operations. Residents employed by the



**Figure 2.** Community ecoreserve and *mirador*, now a parking lot for company employees' motorbikes.

company could not tell me much in my interactions in the mining office in Junín or in other informal interactions. Instead, they deferred to their superiors, those from different regions of Ecuador, some trained as sociologists. When I was able to talk to these elite officials who would drop into the community on occasion, I was given little detail about company operations. For example, when I asked if I could attend a meeting with a women's clothes washing organization, I was told that the women would be too shy to speak if I was there. This comment seemed to suggest that my presence as a researcher was intimidating, but also alluded to a gendered, paternalistic claim that women would be unable to voice their own opinions. In a few interactions with company-employed residents, they often referenced discourses linked to modernization and progress, stating that their work was contributing to Ecuador's development. Just as the Amazon region had contributed oil to state development, now it was Intag's turn to contribute its resources. This discourse coincided with that of elite state officials in Quito who argued that extractivism was socially and environmentally progressive, developing local economies and educational opportunities, putting Ecuador on a path to a postextraction 21st-century socialism (see Fabricant and Gustafson, 2014, Fabricant and Gustafson, 2015).

Following Doshi (2016) women and men were offered basic employment, often in dangerous working conditions, on the basis of social class and gender, naturalizing uneven resource distribution. Even as work with the company promised opportunity, unskilled labor premised on increased precarity constructed residents' everyday reality. In 2018, company officials were waiting on results of soil sampling to determine if the mine would move into the extractive phase. One elite state official told me that only a few residents might be invited to participate in training for these higher skilled jobs. Opportunities for work with the company created the space where some residents were willing to exploit their neighbors for the promise of modernization and progress through extractivism. Junín and Changuayacu Alto would have to be relocated should the open-pit copper mine be constructed. The short-term and flexible labor of the exploration phase facilitated the company's presence in the region, but also demonstrated how CODELCO and ENAMI deepened sociospatial inequality. Fabricant and Gustafson (2015).

Those opposed to extraction in Junín said that while their livelihoods had not changed much since the arrival of ENAMI, interpersonal interactions had shifted. While these residents continued to work in agriculture, growing and selling cattle, in ecotourism, and making *panela* from sugar cane, new everyday fears permeated their lives. There was increased risk of water contamination from exploratory operations. The three antimining families in Junín, who only left their houses to buy something at the local store, illustrated a decline in standard of living. Social interactions in Junín were impossible for antimining families and the community was a quiet shell during the day as most residents left

to work in the concession. Moreover, one antimining resident told me that she would not let her 14-year-old daughter walk alone into the community—now there were strangers who had come from other areas of Ecuador to work with the company, and she feared for her daughter's safety. These observations suggested that the presence of the mining company embedded and reinforced social vulnerabilities, including gendered vulnerabilities, rather than overcoming them (see McHenry-Sorber, 2016).

### *Gender and socioecological contradictions of extraction*

Women who refused to work for the company were confronted with masculinist, paternalistic tendencies of state-led neo-extractivism. Meetings were set up with state officials in the Ministry of Environment in Quito to discuss company violations of environmental regulations established in the concession's environmental impact statement. Marcia recounted how she and a representative from DECOIN were dismissed from this office, with an order to "go home and take care of your kids, and leave environmental protection to the government."

A community meeting I attended in June 2017 in Changuayacu Alto emphasized the complexities of a powerful state affect, as state discourse could not contain residents' lived realities. The meeting was convened to discuss support for improving the road into the region. The community had asked for the meeting with representatives from ENAMI and CODELCO, the provincial government, and the *junta parroquial* (parish council government). All but the provincial government were in attendance. Company officials and the representative from the *junta parroquial* quickly established that the road fell under the provincial government's purview, and thus pushed responsibility for failed improvement onto this level of government.

Arguably, this conclusion in the meeting was a political tactic. The proextraction *junta parroquial* government was quick to remove blame from its office for lack of improvements, placing them on the absent, antiextraction provincial government. Opposing political parties occupied local, municipal, provincial, and national levels of government, and as a result no one agreed to move forward on the road improvements. Through conversations with residents in Intag, I was told that the provincial government argued that fixing the road would only facilitate the entrance of mining vehicles. As residents stood up to contest the lack of promised road improvements, state officials scrolled through their smart phones.

Juana Enríquez, the community secretary, stood to challenge the state's lack of action. Juana was the only person in this meeting who confronted state officials and the only woman to speak during the meeting. She argued that all of the promised infrastructure, a school, hospital, and road, all examples of social investment that would underpin local



social reproduction, had not been constructed. As Motta (2013) has argued, health, education, and housing are all central to social reproduction, with particular gendered impacts. They enable women to “break out of the social isolation” of labor in the home, building up solidarities and freeing time for struggle (Motta, 2013: 39).

At the same time, Juana’s embodied presence in the meeting seemed to suggest that she was acting outside of appropriate class and gender roles. Juana was interrupted by dismissive comments made by the *junta parroquial* representative: “I thought we were here to discuss the road” and “I never promised any of that other infrastructure.” The local state official refused to acknowledge the promised terms of extraction linked to responsibility for residents’ social welfare and reproduction. The dismissive attitude of government and company officials toward Juana and the community illustrated that “in structural terms, extractive economies exacerbate gendered inequalities” (Fabricant and Gustafson, 2015). Juana, following an intervention by the antimining male community president who wanted to diffuse the tension, eventually sat.

In an interview with Juana the next day, she was still fuming. She told me:

[The government and company representatives] make us feel so small—we’re not important...[The representative of the *junta*] wanted to humble me, but I didn’t feel humble...she tried my patience. I said, you’re the authority, come and underestimate me, treat me like a liar! I’m not a liar!

Juana had confronted the state’s central, paternalistic, affective contradictions associated with neo-extractivism: extraction should also lead to infrastructural development. The state promised education and health care, which also suggested a fundamental shift in forms of gendered social reproduction. Yet, when extractivism was unable to deliver on these promises, this revealed space of contradiction and room to challenge the state’s progressive agenda. The contradiction Juana pointed to also illustrated state expectations of becoming a good citizen-consumer, linked to patriarchal/capital expansion (Svampa, 2015). Similar to the dismissive comment made by state officials to Marcia, Juana was also accused of lacking knowledge and ability to confront state authority, and that her embodied, gendered presence in state spaces was out of place in this meeting.

Juana’s comments attempted to open a wider conversation about the structural limits of state power tied to extraction. She pointed to the gap between state and capital, where Inteños continued to bear the burden of the state’s lack of investment, despite paternalistic claims by state officials that suggested otherwise. Juana said

I’m ready to disobey (my male colleague) even if that’s not my intention. The government came to solve the problem of the road, but more so they came to make a bigger problem. I

say, “with the government they only come to look for problems, no?”

Juana refused to let the state off the hook for its failures of responsibility in terms of social reproduction.

Juana told me that she felt emboldened to speak up in the meeting because it was her first time as a *dirigente* or leader of the community. Even as more organized mobilization around biodiversity of the region has dwindled, Juana’s firm antimining stance is still tied to her formation as an ecologist. She said: “Being an ecologist is more than just a name. It’s a fight for our rights.” Juana elaborated, “We’re defending life, our lives, because we have to defend our children, because if the mine comes, it’s like killing ourselves...” She told me that because her mother resisted the mining companies historically, she did as well. (More recently, Juana’s mother decided to work for the company, citing economic opportunity.) Juana said, “Maybe that infused something in me, no? As angry as I am, I am able to see [what needs to be done].” Moreover, she watched videos and saw photos of the negative impacts of mining, and this was like “drinking a glass of poison, when you drink a glass of water.”

Neo-extraction has reconfigured relationships between territory, nation, citizenship, and resources, revealed through social reproduction. In particular, Juana was most concerned about the environment, saying, “I’m a *campesina*, I need the land, it’s our mother and gives us food.” Juana made a distinction between rural and urban life, arguing that life was different in Intag, because one could just go to the land and find *yuca* or bananas, for example. She explained that water in the region was used for cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and now everyone was afraid to use it due to fears of contamination. Juana confronted a powerful state discourse that linked environmentalism to imperialism as a foundation for state sovereignty and nation-building via extraction. She demonstrated that everyday life and social reproduction were essential to state formation. In the meeting with state officials, she understood her own necessities in relation to state authority, “making normative claims about how political life should be” (Pearson and Crane, 2017: 190).

Marcia also engaged the state on the terms of infrastructure linked to extractivism. Her resistance, though, was not tied to confrontation, but instead to direct action. She exhibited self-determination and self-reliance to construct relationships outside of neo-extractive spaces premised on control over collective decision making. Indeed, Marcia (along with Rosario) no longer attended meetings at the community level with state and company officials. She refused to engage in spaces of gendered dismissal. Instead, she highlighted how environmentalism and disruption of commodification of nature linked to copper could produce different outcomes for citizens and the state.

She stated:



We (residents of Intag) have always fought to move ahead, to improve, and moreover, it's our right, because we pay taxes. We, as Intag, have brought many products to market. It's our right to improve the road. Therefore, an *escuela del milenio*, that Correa promised, even if it's very beneficial, it's still a right for us. Education is a right that we have because we have much that's guaranteed us (as citizens). We don't need to wait, as the approximately 16,000 residents of the Intag valley, we don't need to wait for a mining project to cover necessities.

The state became a site through which particular logics of capital expand, where promised infrastructure, including schools and roads was tied to extraction. Yet, Marcia points out that Intefios' labor was also a constitutive force in state formation, and it was through this work that the state emerged. She highlighted how the state was engaged in (re)forming capitalist relations of production and reproduction through extraction, even as residents of Intag had already contributed their fair share of economic production and reproduction in state formation. Marcia and Juana held the state accountable on the terms of the consumer-citizen model of extractivism. They demonstrated failures in this state model, arguing that less exploitative relationships to nature could be possible.

Marcia's comment went further, however, to highlight a distinction between infrastructure as production and education as social reproduction. By pointing to a separation of production and social reproduction in state efforts, Marcia argued the state should hire more teachers in the existing schools or build a computer center. Thus, the model of production linked to neo-extraction puts commodities into circulation, producing a powerful state affect through infrastructural improvements. But Marcia demonstrated that extraction has not actually produced infrastructure or additional teachers, disrupting state affect and citizenship. Moreover, the lack of teachers illustrated that the neo-extractive state model did not necessarily alter residents' own social reproduction. Instead, this model reinforced a gendered division of labor premised on expanding patriarchal capitalism and degraded environments. Capital exploits women's bodies, while failing to overcome systemic forms of gendered exclusion.

For Marcia, resistance hinged on state responsibilities for education and health care, all of which are linked to gendered social reproduction. These are state institutions that can enable women to leave the home, inviting them to contest state-led patriarchal capitalism (Motta, 2013). The state's failures on terms of social welfare suggested ongoing patriarchal relationships. This state-led contradiction of neo-extraction has particular significance for the politics of gendered resistance. Women like Marcia, Juana, and Rosario continued to demonstrate the gendered, socioecological contradictions associated with state-led extractivism. They argued that state failures to invest in their social reproduction impacted their ability to mobilize and organize themselves. Resistance in Intag was constructed through intergenerational social imaginaries that revolved

around gendered claims to production and social reproduction. Women demonstrated that the neo-extractive state model reinforced paternalism through which the patriarchal state expanded. The voices of women highlighted here demonstrated that confrontation, self-determination, and self-reliance continued to inform gendered resistance to mining in Intag, constructing "the state" outside of patriarchal, extractive threats to lives and livelihoods.

## Conclusions

State-sponsored extractivism in Latin America has only exacerbated the commodification of nature. Neoliberal capitalism led to extraction premised on dispossession by private industry and supported by the state. State-led extraction has done little to reverse these "historical dependencies" (Hernández Reyes, 2019: 223). This paper highlighted how gender and environmentalism overlap in specific histories and geographies, through which we can recenter our focus on everyday sites of state formation as resistance. State-led extraction worked to determine what counts as/in the environment, building a paternalistic state that offered labor opportunities and infrastructural improvement linked to extraction.

This paper offers a novel contribution to literature on gendered resistance. Women in Intag have subverted a conversation about progress in neo-extractive state spaces. They demonstrated that extraction is linked to paternalistic discourses of infrastructural improvements and social welfare. Women highlighted that education and hospitals are important sites of gendered social reproduction, and often the very same institutions that allow women to contest gendered, patriarchal structures that confine them to home spaces (see Motta, 2013). State failures to develop these programs demonstrated the gendered limitations of extractive capital, while also interfering in women's ability to resist patriarchal structures that inform their everyday lives. The work of women in Intag called attention to the significance of social reproduction for politics of gendered resistance in state spaces. Gendered, everyday constructions of the neo-extractive Ecuadorian state confronted and intervened in social and ecological transformations in Intag, disrupting progressive links to extractivism.

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