

**Fighting for Andean resources: extractive industries, cultural politics, and environmental struggles in Peru** By Vladimir R. Gil Ramón, Tucson, AZ, University of Arizona Press, 2020, 312, pp. £67.50. ISBN978 0 81653 071 7. Available as e-book. Joy Porter.

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Too often it is assumed that all impact from mining, upon the environment and society, is inherently bad. This is the result of a narrow focus on the power asymmetries between cash-strapped countries (and their needs) and cash-rich countries (and their mining interests). Looking at how extractive industries have impacted Peru, Vladimir Ramón's new book takes readers beyond such thinking and towards a reasoned, granular understanding of how resource politics play out on the ground. *Fighting for Andean resources* offers a highly detailed and forensically researched examination of how extraction is done at local, national and international levels; what the costs and perceived benefits are; and for whom. Peru is a superb example of global trends in mining expansion and in the exploitation of non-renewable resources: while the country's landscapes and ecosystems have been transformed, the level of inequality has remained the same.

Ramón's concern in this book is with what eminent Peruvian historian Jorge Basadre called *Perú profundo* [deep Peru]. The book's analysis centres around the impoverished (rural) groups, at the margins of the mercantilist system, who stand to gain from establishing alliances with more powerful urban, regional, national or multinational groups. Across five chapters, the author brings admirable scope and depth to the task of gathering supporting data. Chapter one looks at the micropolitics of the initial phases of negotiation surrounding the Antamina extraction project and its three principal sites in the Andes Mountain range. The next chapter details how corporate socio-technologies and residents living near mines value the resources and product of mining endeavours differently. Chapter three examines the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process as the main intermediation between nature and society in the geographical context above. Here, Ramón highlights how debates on the ground about environmental impact can

promote political participation and unanticipated alliances. Chapter four reflects on Andean local expectations of how development should proceed through economic and citizen participation. The author analyses the impetus underpinning 'corporate social responsibility' and the local emphasis upon reciprocity and expectations of a 'big gift' as compensation for corporate extraction (pp. 171–2). Chapter five delves into differing perspectives and understandings of environmental contamination.

Among the book's numerous strengths, three are worth mentioning. First, it accurately depicts the violence behind 'involuntary resettlement' that facilitates mining, as for example in San Marcos (1999–2001) (pp. 160–3). Second, Ramón meaningfully highlights how World Bank directives tend to have rhetorical rather than actual valency. In Peru, he explains, these 'served more as an ex post resource for complaints rather than their supposed preventative purpose' (p. 89). Third, Ramón emphasizes how Indigenous kinship affinities and expectations of reciprocity shape actions on the ground; this approach greatly enhances the book's explanatory power. For example, Ramón accounts for the construction of a bullring coliseum in the Huaripampa district as compensation for Antamina's extraction work. The small Andean town of Huallanca also opted for a bullring to be built, along with restoration of a square, also in compensation for Antamina's activities. Both examples underline the relative importance of cultural development, as opposed to economic development, for a significant number of citizens. Analytically, Ramón shies away from explicit anti-mining commentary, but he does condemn bureaucratic environmental processes. Particularly, he finds EIAs can be used for large-scale mining operations as 'tool(s) that legitimize the manipulation of nature' (p. 106).

Two areas could have been explored in greater detail. First, readers would have benefited from an expansion of the material provided on the international actors, including Canada, that exploited Antamina's resources. Second, a more detailed analysis of the privatized transnational businesses and consultants would have shed light on how these actors

smoothed the wheels of rapid 'development' by sub-contracting environmental impact work to local companies. Moreover, although chapter five's discussion of local versus non-local perceptions of environmental risk and contamination is revealing, it does not go beyond recognizing that asymmetries of power exist. Regarding contamination, the discussion falls short of examining how definitions varied depending on which authority set them (the Peruvian government, the Canadian government or the World Bank). To some extent, the use of convoluted language and repetition limits the book's communicative power and its analytical thrust.

Overall, the book's binding idea that 'citizenship could arise through conflict' is not fully supported. This is partly because key terms such as protest, conflict, citizenship and political maturation were not defined in the context of Andean mining conflicts (p. 237). What stands out most are the descriptions of how contamination is swapped for development and of how local peoples have demanded sustainable *obras* [works] in the form of infrastructure with tangible social impact. With profound caveats, Ramón provides ample evidence that in the short-term at least, 'the pollution-development transaction seems to work' (p. 243).