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The rights of the Wayúu people and water in the context of mining in La Guajira, Colombia: demands of *relational water justice*

R. Evan PALMER

Arizona State University, Tempe, USA

Abstract

This article discusses the Wayúu people's use of water as a symbol and tool to fight against the Cerrejón coal mine development in La Guajira, Colombia, by asserting and protecting water's territorial rights. Environmental inequalities and control and infrastructure arrangements have transformed local water dynamics, impacting the Wayúu people in a differentiated way, in a semidesertic region of Colombia where Cerrejón sits—the largest open-pit coal mine in Latin America and Colombia, and the tenth largest in the world. The Wayúu people's traditional and everyday connections with the regions of water have been dispossessed and modified as a result of Cerrejón's technological and environmental interventions in the area, which have an impact on the river Ranchería and its water streams. The group Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu (FMW) has responded by suggesting tactics to protect water and fight against mining. They have also started discussions around the rights and territories of water. According to the FMW, protecting water's territories—holy sites where water spirits reside—suggests that Wayúu territories and water are intrinsically linked and cannot be severed or divided via mining operations or governmental regulations. Their suggestions force us to reevaluate how we define water justice and how we ensure that all living things, including people, have access to water.

Keywords: Colombia, mining, relational water justice, water's territories, Wayúu people

Introduction

There have been criticisms of mining-related water governance in Latin America. This is because mining impacts water sources, such as pollution, drying up and redirecting streams, and waste from extraction, all of which effect the availability and accessibility of water for local populations. Ulloa and Romero-Toledo (2018), Bottaro and Sola Álvarez (2018), Kauffer (2018), Yacoub et al. (2015), and many more research on mining and water have highlighted the growing socioenvironmental tensions. Few studies have examined the role of gender and feminism in relation to water management and mining, as well as women's resistance to these issues (Boelens et al., 2015; Caro, 2018a; Salazar, 2017). This is why I will centre my analysis on the Wayúu people of Colombia's La Guajira department and how the Cerrejón mine's water-related territorial, cultural, and environmental repercussions are intricately linked to gender. Semidesert La Guajira is one of the most climate- and desertification-affected regions on Earth. Environmental inequalities and global-local controls of water and territories have been created by Cerrejón, the largest open-pit coal mine in Latin America and Colombia, as well as the tenth largest in the world. These inequalities impact the availability and quality of water and violate the territorial rights of various social actors, including afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, peasants, and the dynamics of rural-urban populations. The Wayúu people have been most impacted; the mine has had a deep and intense impact on their everyday cultural activities. Wayúu men and women have responded to the mining by standing up for their cultural identity, which includes protecting their area and water.

In this piece, I inquire about the Wayúu people's use of water as a symbol and a weapon in their fight against the Cerrejón coal mine's growth and exploitation. Through their proposals for the protection of water regions and the inclusion of nonhuman rights, the Wayúu people, I contend, have introduced novel relational frameworks for considering environmental and water justice. This approach necessitates acknowledging the cultural viewpoints, notions of lifestyles, and ontology of the Wayúu people. According to them, there is an eternal interdependence and reciprocity between humans and nonhumans, both as autonomous living entities and as political actors.

The grass-root organisation Sütüün Jieyuu Wayúu - Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu (hereinafter FMW) and its political and environmental efforts will be my specific area of attention. FMW, which includes both men and women from the Wayúu community, is the political group that best represents the Wayúu people. In 2006, they started

organising in order to demand human rights, uphold their land, as well as their ethnic rights, and to address the mine's impact on their areas. The cultural, geographical, and political representations of water are at the heart of FMW's protest efforts. According to the FMW, protecting the water's territories—as a holy site where water spirits reside—suggests that Wayúu's territories and water are inseparable, and hence cannot be divided or fragmented by mining operations or government regulations. Within that framework, I will centre my analysis on the ways in which FMW challenges mining by advocating for water justice and the affirmation of rights related to territory, water, gender, and ethnicity.

I will examine coal mining in the Guajira through the lens of a feminist political ecology (FPE) of water, which has been studied by Bodenbroek and Zwartveen (2018) and Zaragocin (2018). This transformation is seen as a manifestation of capitalism and its consequences on the Wayúu people's access to and control over water, as well as on displacement, the acquisition of land and water, and the alteration of domestic spaces. Additionally, I will include posthuman viewpoints that clarify the intricate dynamics of human-nonhuman interactions, including the formation of connections and the exchange of products via relational ontologies (De la Cadena, 2015; Elmhirst, 2015; Escobar, 2015). According to Ullaa (2017), this method elucidates the need for territorial rights to water and the requirement for relative water justice.

An approach to methodology that has been developed in collaboration with FMW since 2018 forms the basis of this study. Sources include ethnographic research, interviews, and narrative analysis of FMW-produced media (such as films, conferences, and political statements). The heads of FMW have their own journals where they share their thoughts and opinions. To counter the perception that local expressions are only oral testimony, they would rather have nonindigenous scholars use these publications to articulate their opinions based on their own research processes. That is why I back up my claims with quotations from their publications.

Here is how the article is organised: First, I lay down some theoretical groundwork by discussing environmental justice, relational ontologies, and FPE views on water. In the second section, we will examine how the Cerrejón mine in La Guajira has altered the water supply in geographical, cultural, and ecological ways. In the third section, we will examine the dynamics and resistance tactics used by FMW in protecting their waterlands and way of life. Last but not least, I will go over the consequences for finding a territorial justice, environmental justice, and relational justice perspective that ensures the existence of all living things, both human and others.

Water's territorial rights: posthumans and feminist perspectives

Notions of water as an economic good or commodity (Villa, 2012) have underpinned development and extractive projects that generate water conflicts and injustices. Mining in particular produces social inequalities, erases ethnic and local rights, increases water grabbing, and establishes hydro-power (understood as a process of water control and instrumental and infrastructure modification of the rivers, streams, and underground water). Mining hydropower relations affect the access, use, and decision making in relation to water and exclude diverse social actors and their gender differences in the political processes. To address the gender and ethnic differences under water control by mining and water injustices, I will focus on the theoretical approaches of gender, FPEs, relational ontologies, and environmental justice, to guide the analysis of this article.

Gender and feminist political ecologies of water

Gender inequality in mining, water availability, and participation in water decision-making have all been the subject of research (Harris, 2009; Lahiri-Dutt, 2009; Sultana, 2009, 2011). They have also brought attention to the fact that women's lives, emotions, and bodies are affected by the water crisis. Much as how feminist criticisms shed light on the connections between gender and water politics, water analysis from various FPE movements has produced specific claims in their critical assessments of gender inequality. Resistance processes related to water's access, control, usage, decision-making, and rights have also been brought to light. According to Buechler and Hanson (2015), Elmhirst (2015), and Resurrección (2019), FPE provides a multi-faceted view of socio-water dynamics and gender inequality. Also, extractivist processes and their impacts on local social dynamics, water management, and territorial appropriation have become a new area of study. The water element is the new focal point of these investigations. It is necessary, according to Bossenbroek and Zwartveen (2018), to "theorise water dynamics and gender dynamics as intimately linked: materially (through labour and property relations), and symbolically and discursively (through norms, meanings and symbols)." The authors further state that "gender" and "water" are constantly defining and redefining each other, as if in a perpetual dance. In light of this, discussions have arisen about structural inequalities and how they impact women's access to and ability to make choices about water management. The impact of everyday water dispossession on women's activities,

quotidian experiences, and emotions may be better understood by adopting a new perspective on water and gender (Zaragocin, 2018). This perspective integrates water-territory and body-territory (Ojeda et al., 2015).

Therefore, to examine the gender-mining-water relations, one must first examine how women's bodies, seen as the initial territory, are impacted by water scarcity (due to unequal appropriation, power relations, and territorial control) and water politics (Colectivo de geografía crítica, 2018; Zaragocin, 2018). As a safeguard against the violent daily dispossessions, it is also important to think about the interplay between the territories of the body and the water.

Relational ontologies and nonhumans: water as a political actor

Feminist perspectives look for new analysis around subjectivities and identities (bodies, human, nonhuman), under new and complex assemblies of power related to environmental discussions. These perspectives open the door for gender debates in the direction of the recognition of identities associated with ethnicity, race, and intersectionality and an opening toward viewing nonhumans as political actors. These approaches allow us to focus on natures-cultures and posthumanism (Elmhirst, 2015; Harcourt and Nelson, 2015). For these reasons, it becomes increasingly important to position different ways of interaction among humans and nonhumans that decenter the predominant anthropocentric approach to water (center on humans' necessities) by claiming other ways of seeing the nonhuman. Here it is important to start with a relational ontologies' perspective, which understands relationships between humans and nonhumans in non-anthropocentric terms.

There are relational ontologies in which "humans and non-humans (the organic, the non-organic, and the supernatural or spiritual) are integral parts of these worlds in their multiples' interrelations" (Escobar, 2015: 98). This implies the recognition that there are other conceptions of rights for nonhumans that include territory and all beings (De la Cadena, 2015; Escobar, 2015). In this sense water as a non-human entity can be considered not only as a part of the relationships between humans and nonhumans, but also as an important part in the coproduction of the humans-water's territories relationships. Water also has its own place that is shared with other living entities; it is a means to guarantee the life of human beings and other beings, and water is a common good that allows social dynamics of use and collective processes linked with cultural perspectives.

Environmental and water justice: water's territories

Environmental justice debates have a long tradition related to the recognition of rights, distribution, participation and capabilities, environmental injustices, environmental conflicts, social movements, and local confrontations (Holifield, 2015; Schlosberg, 2007, 2013). Water justice also addresses

water conflicts and injustices of access, control, decision making and rights under power relationships and the social inequalities of water use, management, and governance under specific politics of water (Boelens et al., 2018; Budds, 2010; Perreault, 2014). Recently, thanks to extractivist processes on indigenous territories, the dialogue has included nonhuman perspectives leading to new notions of environmental justice. According to Ulloa (2017: 179) “Under these perspectives, environmental justice should be understood as an ethical, political, territorial, and reciprocal action with the nonhumans from indigenous territorial and cultural principles.” Building on indigenous peoples’ identity and political dynamics leads to a notion of *relational indigenous environmental justice* (Ulloa, 2017).

I will propose an approach of environmental and water justice to address water–humans relationship. This approach arises from Wayúu’s notion of *water’s territories*, which include not only the territories of water (as being) but also other nonhumans and spiritual entities as part of those territories, and locate water as a political actor that is in permanent relationship with humans. Under this perspective the rights of water and nonhumans could be called a *relational water justice*.

The above-mentioned discussions allow me to analyze how the Cerrejón generates cultural, territorial, and environmental impacts that affect not only Wayúu’s every day practices, lives, and bodies, but also water and nonhumans’ territories. It allows me to analyze how Wayúu people are demanding *relational water justice* to face mining processes

and how they position their defense of their territories and cultural identity.

La Guajira, Cerrejón, and its cultural, territorial, and environmental transformations

The department of La Guajira (Figure 1) is the most unequal in Colombia (Gini 0.553, 2017). It registers a poverty rate of 55.8%, and 25.7% of the population is in extreme poverty (Gobernación de La Guajira, 2017). Although royalties from the mining-energy sector are an important fiscal source, La Guajira has the highest rate of unsatisfied basic needs (NBI) with 44.6%, ranking above the NBI of the Caribbean region (26.9%) and the national average (14.6%; Gobernación de La Guajira, 2017). In sociocultural terms, La Guajira is very diverse; 44.9% of the population belongs to the Wayúu, Kogui, Wiwa, and Arhuaco indigenous peoples, representing 20.2% of the total indigenous population of Colombia. Additionally, 40.3% are mestizo or white, 14.8% Afro-Colombian, and 0.04% Rom people (Gobernación de La Guajira, 2017).

La Guajira is a semidesertic region. Within Colombia, it is one of the areas most affected by climate change and with greater water complications due to intense periods of drought and desertification that affect sources of water (IDEAM, 2018). The most important river in the department of La Guajira is the Ranchería. It begins in the Sierra Nevada de



Figure 1. Localization of La Guajira, Colombia.

Santa Marta, passing through Riohacha in the east before Aguas Blancas, have been diverted so that coal extraction may emptying into the Atlantic Ocean at an elevation of 3,800 continue. As a result, the surrounding ecosystems are being m.a.s.l. (Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible- impacted by increased erosion and water shortages, as well as a MADS, Corpoguajira and Universidad de Antioquia- decline in biodiversity, agricultural land, and river flow Udea, 2013). Several times throughout its course, the (Fuentes et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the river and water dynamics Ranchería river has been dammed. Built in 2002 and become a source of disruption for Wayúu's sociocultural filled in 2010, the multi-purpose dam El Cercado has interactions (Caro, 2018a, b;

restricted water flow upstream. While this dam is not a megadam, it does have comparable consequences on water and biodiversity cycles, as well as on cultural

landscapes and ways of life (Boelens et al., 2018). Additionally, the use of water for intense agricultural

uses in the upper basin impacts the accessibility of water in the centre of the Ranchería river. Nevertheless, the

wayúu people and the river stream are more impacted by the coal mining operations in Cerrejón.

In 1983, the Colombian government and Intercor, a US subsidiary of EXXON, took over the exploitation of

Cerrejón. Cerrejón, a group of multinational mining corporations including BHP Billiton plc of Australia,

Anglo American plc of South Africa, and Glencore plc of Switzerland, has been operating the mine since 2007. Its

operations impact the majority of La Guajira's terrain via coal mine, a rail transportation line, and a thermal carbon

marine port. Cerrejón has an operational licence that extends until 2034 and produces around 30 million

tonnes of coal per year. It encompasses around 100 km² in terms of mining extraction area. In the mining and

quarrying industry, Cerrejón contributes 2% to the national GDP and creates 44% of the departmental GDP

(Cerrejón, 2017).

The mining operation in Cerrejón has the following impacts on water quality:

a violation of the rights to water, food, a healthy environment, and health, among other things; the

cumulative effects of this violation include, but are not limited to, the following: the diversion of water sources,

massive deforestation, pollution of air and water, occupation of ancestral territories, and excessive water

consumption (more than 45 million liters/day in 2015). Along with the failures of public policies and corruption,

this has contributed to a humanitarian crisis within an entire department. Citation: (Fuentes et al., 2018: 27)

Cerrejón dumps coal mining waste into 15 dumping ponds, which are extremely polluting because to the

presence of heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, zinc, and manganese. These ponds are located in the Ranchería

river, which is in the centre of the basin, as well as the Tabaco, Bruno, and Cerrejón streams. A number of

streams, including Arroyo Bruno, Manantialito, and

Cultural and territorial transformations

Various territorial and socioenvironmental problems have arisen since the mine was established. Because of impacts on their land

and territorial rights, these conflicts have altered the urban and territorial dynamics of the indigenous Wayúu people. The

environmental repercussions, health difficulties, emissions of combustion gases, and vibrations caused by the use of explosives

on the mine are all consequences of mining that the Wayúu people are having to endure. More than 7,000 Wayúu people have been

forcibly removed from their homes and relocated inside the Baja Guajira during the 1980s due to the mine's growth (Cabrera and

Fierro, 2013). Important territorial dynamics including homes and cemeteries, clan-based neighbourhood building, and water

availability are all impacted by this displacement. Both sexes have been impacted by the coal extraction at the

Cerrejón mine. In particular, the mine development necessitated relocation, which altered their water supply, altered their territorial

dynamics, and altered their relationships with nonhumans. As a result of losing their ancestral lands, women have had to forge new

spiritual and cultural bonds. Every day, they bathe, cook, and take care of both people and non-humans, all while searching for new

water sources, which forces them to travel larger distances (Ortiz et al., 2018). Because they entail feelings, the intangible harm and

new relationships with places caused by territorial relocation are difficult to put a price on.

For instance, women no longer had access to the river and its tributaries, which meant they could no longer participate in

culturally significant activities like as washing, cooking, bathing, connecting with one another, and sharing.

Women have been impacted since the water level was formerly permanent but is now not. They send the boys and girls to faraway

places and wells to get water when they themselves are unable to do it. There are a lot of issues that girls face. Because they are

often alone while they travel, some females get pregnant. Tank trucks are out of water, so they'll have to depart. (Christina Ortiz,

2018, one-on-one conversation)

The Wayúu people's spiritual connections with water, as well as their cultural bonds with one another, have undergone a radical

change. Since water is not a sentient entity, its domains are also holy. To cleanse negative energy, pray to the mother of water, or

conduct rituals, women often visit locations near bodies of water. To them, water is both living and vital. Yet, it is equally

vulnerable to injury due to its living nature. Due to depletion, the Aguas Blancas stream is no longer flows.

the quarry, and the female water spirit, Pulowi, lost control of her domain. Animals and flora perished along with the water, which had a direct negative impact on the Wayúu women. Dispossession has been a daily occurrence for them.

We are unable to traverse the stream at the present moment. The company has limited our ability to move about. Since there is no longer any water and its territories are vanishing, we will no longer be able to gather in the wells. Because the Pulowi isn't there, we can't carry out our ceremonies. All living things, including ourselves, are succumbing to the lack of water. (Yaneth Ortiz, 2019, correspondence with the author)

Specifically among the Wayúu people, Cerrejón's hydropower has a profound impact on the economic, culinary, and symbolic aspects of water as well as on the everyday lives of men and women. The politicisation of water has been facilitated by these hydroelectric processes. Wayúu people have experienced territorial fragmentation, exclusion, and inequality as a result of monetary compensation for environmental damage, environmental mitigation efforts, and the encouragement of "local development" of communities under the concept of "public good." Changes in water flows, drainages, and ecosystem dynamics have resulted in physical transformations as a result of mining processes. The Wayúu people experience symbolic transformations as a result of the commercialization of water and the emergence of new power dynamics, which decontextualize their cultural dynamics and the ties between humans and water. Thus, the fights over water become a political arena and a symbol of power dynamics that are not evenly distributed.

Wayúu people's resistances and dynamic of water's territorial defenses: Fuerza de Mujeres Wayúu

A population of people known as the Wayúu live in both Colombia and Venezuela. La Guajira is home to over 270,000 of these individuals, or 42.2% of Colombia's total population. Legally, 1,084,027 of them have 28 resguardos (collective areas) (Archila, 2015). Wayúu culture and beliefs are deeply ingrained in their land. (There are three distinct sizes: horizontal, vertical, and hybrid). They see rain (juyaá-mobile) and water (winkat) as sentient entities in their own right. The rain brings moisture to the land, which is Mna-immobile, and then life begins to sprout, giving rise to the Wayúu. Caro (2018a, b) and Vásquez and Correa (1993) both agree that water and soil are fundamental to the

sociocultural territorial organisation that links two areas of existence. The Wayúu people also hold dreams in high regard, since they serve as channels for communication with the spirits of the departed, who might provide guidance, warn of impending danger, or

concerns with the environment, including those involving water (Vásquez and Correa, 1993). In 2018, Robles Chávez asserts: The Wayúu have faith that the spirits show them the best spot to dig for underground water in their dreams. The yonna (sacred dance), prepared meat and spirits are some of the sacrifices that people make in appreciation for such a beneficent contribution; once the source is identified, the spirit's requests must be fulfilled.

Wayúu people believe that a feminine spirit called Pulowi grants access to water to both humans and nonhumans, and that the holy sites where water is born are guarded by this spirit. Since these areas are considered water's domains, Wayúu refrain from residing there out of respect for the spirits that inhabit there and because each region deserves its own special closeness. Water is best understood as a political actor with distinct locations and dynamics when considering its territories. Cultural views of gender, especially as it pertains to women, inform these ideas, since both water and women are associated with the gift of life. In addition to making decisions and carrying out rituals pertaining to water, women also lead the processes of using it.

The Wayúu people have been fighting against coal mining on their land from the start of the mine's exploitation in 1983, citing the negative effects on the environment, culture, and daily dispossessions as reasons to oppose the practice. They have also been demanding social and environmental justice. The Wayúu people have suffered from environmental degradation, sociospatial segregation, devastation, loss of common assets, and lack of autonomy and self-determination as a result of coal extraction (Archila et al., 2015; Ortiz et al., 2018). Using this foundation of resistance, FMW is now focusing on two primary goals: making the environmental, social, and cultural effects of Cerrejón known on a global scale and providing visual representations of the human and ethnic rights abuses that have taken place.

FMW has also started a conversation on how the Cerrejón mine disproportionately impacts women. "We feel it because we are children of the earth, and our elders say it; it's as if all this looting, the fact that they are looting her coal, is like removing a piece of flesh from your child or one's self" (Romero and Barón, 2013: 28), Wayúu women say, describing the painful relationship with Mother Earth that has persisted since mining began. Water, according to FMW, is a political actor with inherent jurisdiction over certain areas. Water, however, when seen as a commodity, gives rise to disparities and

gives rise to novel human and animal practices around its use, environmental, and territorial activities, its development would alter management, and accessibility. the water cycle, which is a violation of the right to water. The In their homelands, the Wayúu people take the lead in deviation, nevertheless, persisted. According to Fuerza de Mujeres resistances, initiatives, and alternative partnerships with Wayúu (2015: 1), who made a statement on the matter in 2015: nonhumans. They fight for the right to exist and reside in their homelands. Water, in their view, has been lost in the mining We bring this message based on the suffering that has been caused by operation. Although FMW has spearheaded a number of the transnational company Cerrejón and the impacts of open pit territorial defences, protecting waterways is an inseparable mining. The suffering is seen as one of the worst historical tragedies, bond that mining cannot break. and the permanent mistreatment of Wounmainkat, our Mother Earth, is seen as an integral part of this strategy. The project is a perverse procedures or divide them according to established regulations. attempt by Cerrejón and its shareholders to generate profits for In defence of their water's lands, FMW has organised a wide themselves and maintain control over our territory and its natural variety of activities, including local demonstrations, national assets, with the support of consumerist countries and their economic legal proceedings, and the formation of transnational networks power. with other players. A Wayúu chieftain named Romero (2015a) says:

Serious sociocultural ramifications and the disruption of the social We see it as a holy public benefit, passed down through network of an entire community that has traditionally stayed in their generations, whereas "they" (the extractivists) see it as a ancestral land have been brought about by a power that only translates resource for profit. We are not a group of women looking for into money, which has been the source of the Wayúu indigenous "resources," but rather the resistance of our people against the people's biggest misfortunes. international corporations who are encroaching on our land. They should take a page out of our book and be accountable for creating new lives, just as we are. Neither environmental policy nor sustainable development can be considered without this.

FMW confronting mining impositions and defending water's rights

Politically, FMW has also backed efforts to protect the Cerrejón and other Guajira coal mines perpetuate gender Rancheria River. The Wayúu people's water supply, inequality and ethnically and sex-based territorial exclusions as a accessibility, and quality were all impacted by the result of colonial power relations of exploitation. The international government's 2010 El Cercado dam building, which intensified mine owners are controlling the water supply in this manner, which the already existing dispute with mining. Following this, has a profound impact on the Wayúu people's everyday lives, Cerrejón proposed a mine expansion in 2011, which would particularly their water-related traditions. There is an epistemic have diverted the Ranchería river. FMW formed coalitions aggression against Wayúu ideas because their conceptions of human-with other social movements, including the Comité Cívico de nonhuman connections are either ignored or left out. Concurrently, La Guajira en Defensa del Río Ranchería, el Manantial de nonhumans and their lives are subjected to violence. Economic Cañaverales y las Regalías, and NGO, and on 1 August 2012, considerations in mining ignore cultural, environmental, and legal they demanded a regional mobilisation in Riohacha in rights that have long been acknowledged by international and national opposition to mining. They conducted an excursion along the policy. International economic actors are able to appropriate Ranchería river from August 16th to the 20th, 2012, paying indigenous areas, both symbolically and in reality, because of this close attention to the consequences of its diversion. These failure to recognise their existence. deeds affected people all throughout the world. Even though While condemning the Cerrejón mine's effects, FMW's political they cited financial concerns, Cerrejón halted the project. To activities aim to place their cultural viewpoints. Romero (2015b), the defend the water's territories and condemn Cerrejón's actions Wayúu chief, says: for their social, cultural, and environmental impacts, FMW has used a variety of political tactics and maintained a worldwide presence since then. The Wayúu women are represented by territory, which is seen as a The Paradero and La Gran Parada Wayúu indigenous villages living being by humans. As a lady, Mna represents the planet Earth. in La Guajira petitioned the Constitutional Court in December For all things related to water—rain, rivers, streams, fecundation, 2017 to prevent mining from expanding into the Arroyo Bruno etc.—Juyaá is an integral aspect. Because the veins are fundamental stream and its habitat. In addition to disrupting cultural, to our relationship with the Bruno stream—the veins of Wounmainkat,

our land, mother earth—cutting a vein is like to cutting off a relational indigenous environmental justice, which takes a different lifeline. The dream world is very symbolic for us since all approach to environmental and water justice. However, we might alter dreams originate in the Bruno stream. Our Bruno stream had this idea and interpret it through the lens of Wayúu context as a symbolic value since we engaged in spiritual activities there. relational water justice, where water territories are seen as living This stream is important not only to La Guajira, but to the beings deserving of recognition as a political actor in their own right. whole country and the globe at large due to the Additionally, it paves the way for the demand for water justice, which interconnectedness of all things. includes the right to water availability and access for all living things, not just people. It ensures the survival of all living things, both human

In opposition to local dynamics, mining-related economic and otherwise, and permits the maintenance of both spiritual and activities cause and produce economic changes and material life. articulations. We can demonstrate how a mining operation Specifically, the fight for FMW and water's territories, as well as affects a whole region, culture, and way of life using these resistance to mining, has sparked discussions about human and methods, rather than just one location or people. The mining nonhuman territoriality, the rights of water and nonhumans to it, and process has an impact on both the human and animal bodies, as the ability of both humans and nonhumans to access water, prompting well as the environments in which they interact. a reevaluation of the commons and water justice. This is particularly Economic development initiatives like mining may be true in water-scarce areas like La Guajira, where they are broadening critiqued via the Wayúu people's relational paradigm, which our understanding of environmental and water justice arguments. views land and water as living creatures and disrupts or Recognising the Wayúu people's identities connected to territory and decolonizes water is essential, according to their situated knowledge. They add to water and the concept of nature as goods. It adds to the the current tendencies in FPEs that widen their attention to natures- ongoing discussions about water justice by proposing the idea cultures, posthumanism, and indigenous activist movements centred of water as a political actor and a nonhuman with rights. on structural and everyday environmental inequities. The indigenous Wayúu people are fighting for the acknowledgement of their autonomy, right to decide for The fact that Wayúu is fighting extractivism shows that there is a new themselves, and their belief in the eternal interdependence of approach to environmental politics. This approach might challenge all living beings. Since they are water spirits and these holy socioenvironmental inequities and put other ideas of nature and rights sites unite many nonhumans on various scales, they also lay into perspective. Finding new ways out of mining and the daily claim to defending water regions. The ancestral rights and expropriation by capitalists is central to their resistances. legal rights over their regions are also demanded by the Wayúu By looking at the political efforts I described earlier, we can see how people. Because of its central role in the process of life FMW has built networks on a local, national, and transnational scale reproduction, they are challenging conventional wisdom about to protect their ancestral land. Environmental non-governmental water and calling for a reevaluation of their own ontology, organisations (NGOs) (including national NGOs like Censat-Agua epistemology, and relationships with it. viva, CINEP, and CCajar), NGOs focused on human rights, academic Because of these reasons, FMW offers a fresh vocabulary for institutions, university students, and worldwide and national networks defending life in the face of extractivism. As important for water and environmental justice are all part of these networks. nonhuman entities with the right to exist and experience their But these activists are now under jeopardy because of FMW's political territory, FMW urges the protection of streams like the activities. The majority of FMW members are shielded from harm by Ranchería and Bruno rivers, among others. Since people and the federal government due to paramilitary groups' beliefs that the nonhumans (rivers) have always been interdependent, this Wayúu people are opposed to progress and development. Their means that the rivers are really a part of humanity. In their defence of their land and the land around water continues unabated in view, the foundation of human-nonhuman interactions is in the the face of danger. reciprocity between various creatures that occupy the horizontal and vertical spaces within their domain. In this worldview, both sentient beings and inanimate objects possess the ability to behave in relation to certain locations and hold the political sway to determine those locations' fates. In particular, the FMW and the Wayúu people as a whole want the acknowledgment of this claim, and they also want water to be protected and understood as a site of encounters and exchanges.

Ulloa (2017) argues that the Wayúu people's demands call for

Conclusion

My emphasis in this piece has been on the FMW's protests against mining in their territory and for the access to water. New ideas of water justice have been proposed by FMW via their fight, as I have shown. Cerrejón has implemented environmental and technological interventions on the Ranchería river and its water streams, which have resulted in displacements and changes in gender roles and the cultural and everyday interactions between the Wayúu people and their water-related lands. Among Cerrejón's many water interventions are the

following: pollution, drying, stream diversion, and waste from coal extraction, all of which have an impact on the river. The semiarid region of La Guajira is where these interventions are taking place; it is also the area of Colombia that is being hit the hardest by the effects of climate change and desertification, making it even more difficult for indigenous people to get water.

The Wayúu people, and FMW in particular, have fought back against the Cerrejón's growth by positioning water's territories and territorial rights against it. Their relational ontology rests on the idea that life goes on, and they want it acknowledged. From this cultural vantage point, indigenous women protect life because they are deeply rooted in their communities and have a special relationship to the water.

Wayúu are putting out a relational water justice system that recognises water as both a living being and a political actor deserving of rights in this manner. From this vantage point, we may call for water justice, which encompasses the right of water to its own land, as well as the right of all living things to have access to, and use, water, not just people but all living things. To exist, feel, and be oneself need water. New ways of life are also included by this idea. Wayúu's demands may be seen as a response to the appropriation, exclusion, and dispossession of their lands and everyday activities, and as a means to bring fresh critical views to the understanding of water. Similarly, the capitalist and globalised view of water as a commodity is challenged by FMW's political and territorial defence operations. These theoretical and political stances bring attention to a posthuman shift, whereby nonhumans are seen as political agents and beings, and they add to the ongoing discussions around feminist political ecologies of water. In light of the FMW's calls for relational water justice, there have been recent conversations on relational ontologies. The production of knowledge about water and the category of "water" need to be rethought and decolonized as a result of this. The opportunity to reevaluate the interplay between humans, their territory, and water is another perk. A new approach to territorial-water politics is shown by the political dynamics of FMW.

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