



ARTÍCULO ORIGINAL

Social imaginary and mining exploration projects Nuñoa Puno-Peru

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Abstract

The study on the social imaginary of the local actors, affected by the exploration works of the mining company, is highly relevant to achieve complementarity between agricultural and mining activities. The objective of the article is to analyze and interpret the social imaginary of local actors about the mining exploration project in the district of Nuñoa. The methodology that was applied is the phenomenological approach, with the techniques and instruments of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and documentary review, with a sample stratified by quotas. As results we have that some local actors indicate that mining cannot coexist with agriculture, while others consider that it would generate opportunities for improvement and local development. The preservation of the environment at the local level is based on the harmonious relationship established by the inhabitants with the natural environment, expressed in Andean cultural practices. Regarding local perceptions, the absence or inaction of the State is perceived, and the actors of regional and national institutions perceive that the State assumes the regulatory role of mining activities and natural resources, through norms and laws. It is concluded that, around the social imaginary of local actors in front of the mining exploration project, it is varied, both in rejection and acceptance; it is understood that there is a complementarity between the Andean worldview and the western worldview; and finally, local actors perceive that the State is absent, while regional and local actors perceive only the regulatory role of the State.

Keywords: Social imaginary, mining exploration, environment, perception, socio-environmental conflicts

1. Introduction

The mentalities of the actors are understood as the perspectives, approaches, visions, points of view, ways of thinking, perceptions, and interests that different groups have regarding mining activities. In this sense (Sanchez et al., 2016) argues that the perception of potential environmental conflicts is shaped by culture, education, and social influences (Carrillo, 2011), and plays a role in determining priorities and incompatibilities between unsatisfied needs in a conflict that can lead to violence. It is also said that perceptions (Pachas, 2013), are very tense among mining, farmers, forestry, and native populations, in addition to regional NGOs and state institutions. On the other hand (Medina, 2015), argues that the generation of expectations is associated with tomorrow and the future in the rural community. For the (Association for Research and Social Studies, 2010), the villagers consider that mining is incompatible with traditional activities, they also believe that they compete for spaces, while (Mucho, 2017), states the opposite, arguing that Peru is an Agro-mining Country par excellence.

The Andean worldview is understood as the beliefs, ideas, visions, utopias, and dreams around the preservation of certain natural resources; in the Andean worldview (Narrea, 2018), man must

always be in harmony with nature, which is regulated by the action of divinities. In coherence with the previous approach (National Mining Society, 2016), highlights the importance of knowing the affected population well. For this reason, along with mining exploration, a "social exploration" should also be carried out.

Social conflict as a complex process, in which society, State, and companies perceive that their positions, interests, objectives, objectives, values, beliefs or needs are contradictory, which could lead to violence (Ombudsman's Office, 2017). From the theory of social conflict (Dahrendorf, 1962), we can argue that social conflicts, in principle, constitute opportunities for change and transformation. However, from the perspective of Parsons' structural-functionalism, cited in (Ritzer, 1993), social conflicts would constitute factors that negatively affect the functioning of the social system.

In the words of (Bedoya, 2014), miners and critics confront different visions regarding the performance of companies, environmental impacts, and negotiations between companies and communities, particularly with regard to land (p. 16). Similarly (Luque, 2016), affirms that problems become conflicts when people experience damage or threat of harm and their reaction, expressed as a social demand expressed as a claim in reparations for damage to human health, up to opposition to mining projects themselves (Maquet, 2013). In other words, in every society there are social conflicts, what varies is the quantity and especially the way in which these are manifested (Panfichi and Coronel, 2014). On the other hand (De Echave et al., 2012), maintains that the growth of mining activity has been accompanied by an increase in social conflict in Peru, however (Arellano, 2014), argues that there is a diversity of criteria among the different actors, some think that conflicts are a form of popular resistance to the forces of global capitalism and environmental destruction. From the perspective of (De Echave et al., 2009), most companies know that a new mining operation can generate protests, and in order to operate, besides the legal permits and authorizations, it is necessary to have a "social license". (Sanchez et al., 2016), state that "... the perception of potential conflicts is shaped by culture, education and social influences, and plays a key role in determining priorities and incompatibilities between unmet needs in a conflict, which can lead to violence".

According to the approach of (Hoogesteger, 2014), "Communities in the Andes tend to have strong organizational structures and integrated forms of collective action that maintain their identity, traditions, access to natural resources, especially water and land" (p. 26); the problem is water (Coronel, 2013), and therefore many communities feel the possible danger of contamination by mines. In relative coherence with the above, in the (Supreme Decree N° 001-2010-AG.-Regulation of the Water Resources Law, Law No 29338 - 2010), water is conceived as a renewable, vulnerable and scarce natural resource. For their part (Budbs & Hinojosa-Valencia, 2012), argue that "water is not only a material resource, but it is also a cultural resource. In terms of (Urteaga et al., 2011), land purchases by mining companies have significantly modified the meaning of the water map in the communities. The role of the State in the development of mining activities and therefore in the preservation of the environment presents gaps and weaknesses (Ruffner, 2012). Thus, when analyzing the role of the State (Arellano, 2008), has identified three weaknesses in the mining sector: first, the presence of local leadership disconnected from the parties and the national political agenda. Second, the lack of capacities is reflected in the presence of civil servants. Third, inconsistency in the generation of public policies for the mining sector (Urteaga et al., 2011), argues that the State has been captured by economic forces and de factual powers within the neoliberal model. In the economic globalization, political and social contexts, according to (León, 2000), the role of the State is being reformulated and redefined. According to (Carrillo, 2011), in practice, the participation of the State has been directed more towards solving the problems generated by the extractive industry than towards identifying and attacking the causes that generate them. We will give an account of some research for your consultations, related to the present study, such as the case of (Luque, 2016), (Coronel, 2013), (Budbs & Hinojosa-Valencia, 2012). The present research obeys the following objectives i) characterize the social imaginary of the main social actors in the areas of influence of mining exploration projects, ii) analyze the actors' worldview on environmental conservation in the areas of influence of mining exploration projects, iii)

interpret the perceptions of the actors around the role of the State institutions in the areas of influence of mining exploration projects.

2. Methods

Scope or place of study

The study location is the Puno region and the districts of Nuñoa and Macusani, in the provinces of Melgar and Carabaya, respectively. The Santo Domingo Project is located in an area with elevations ranging between 4600 masl and 5150 masl.

Description of Methods

The epistemological stance of the present research is framed in comprehensive sociology and in the historical-hermeneutic qualitative approach (Theodor, 2001; Moreno, 2005; Husserl, 1973; Hermoza, 2009; Ñaupas et al., 2018; Katayama, 2014) and was conducted in 2018. The sample size was determined through non-probabilistic sampling (Hernández Sampiere et al., 2014), and quota sampling was adopted according to spatial and social characteristics (Navarrete, 2000). A sample of 41 social actors was taken, including presidents and directors of social organizations, community leaders, the mayor, the sub-prefect, the justice of the peace, and representatives of the Puno region.

In order to determine the informants, first the areas of direct and indirect influence of the project were identified; second, the representatives of the organizations, communities, and institutions were determined; third, according to the mapping of actors, the actors that have influence in their organization were identified; fourth, the representatives of the local and regional public institutions were registered by their functionality; all this was organized by study categories such as: social imaginary of the interest groups or main social actors, the worldview of the inhabitants and role of the state.

The data collection techniques and instruments used were as follows:

- i. Semi-structured interview.
- ii. Participant observation.
- iii. Content analysis (Valles, 1997).

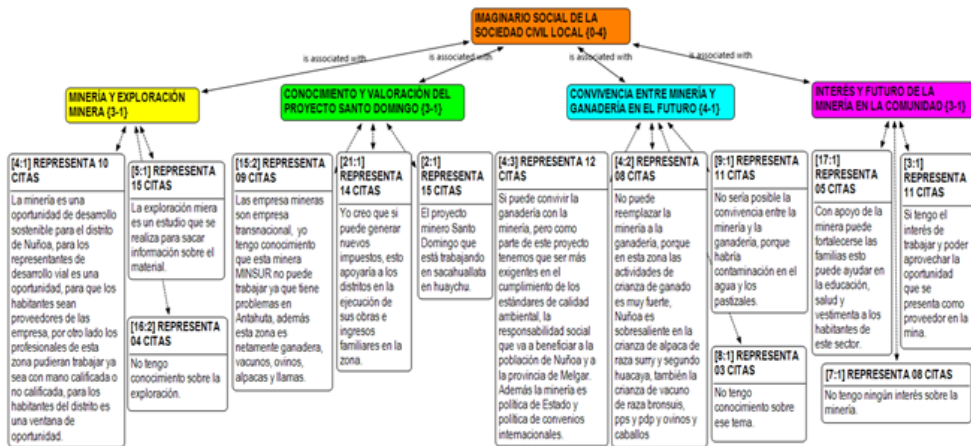
The processing and analysis of the data were carried out with the help of the qualitative analysis software tool Atlas.ti v.7, which made it possible to systematize and make diagrams of the data through semantic networks for each dimension and category of analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Social imaginary of local institutions in the area of influence of the mining exploration project.

Considering that the social imaginary implies the sense and meanings socially instituted in a certain society, in Figure 1, the social imaginary of the representatives of the local institutions of Nuñoa regarding mining and mineral exploration is expressed in different ways. On the one hand, for all of the actors mentioned before, mining exploration is the phase or stage of identification or knowledge of a certain mineral or minerals found in an area or territory. In terms of (Damonte & Glave, 2016) mining exploration comprises various activities to determine the existence, location, and value of mineral concentrations. Consistent with the previous approach, (Bautista Bazan, 2020) highlights the importance of knowing the affected population well. Therefore, along with mining exploration, a "social exploration" must also be carried out.

Figure 1. Semantic Network of the Social Imaginary of the Local Institutions in the Zone of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project



Source: According to the data processed and analyzed in the Atlas.ti computer program (February, 2018).

In reference to the knowledge and valuation of the Santo Domingo project, they argue that all responsible mining contributes to the development of the locality, both economically, socially and culturally. In this sense, (Mucho, 2017) states that Peru is an Agro-mining Country, where he quantifies the contribution of mining and agriculture to the Peruvian economy; on the other hand we can also mention that mining in Nuñoa is a media issue due to the situation of the environmental pollution.

In relation to the coexistence between mining and cattle ranching in the future, in Figure 1, we can see that an important group of interviewees state that mining can in no way replace cattle ranching, because the life cycle of mining is temporary, while cattle ranching is more stable over time. As argued by (de Echave et al., 2009) local communities are the most affected actors by the presence of the mining company, due to the inevitable alteration of their traditional ways of life. These are generally rural populations dedicated to agricultural activities, which are organized into various associations of residents and producers. Only a small number of local authorities report that mining coexists with livestock and agriculture but with the use of modern technology.

According to the results obtained, local institutions have their imaginary social expressed in the interest and future of mining in the community, where key informants have referred that the mining project can fulfill its social responsibility by supporting the development of the area of direct and indirect influence, and in particular, the capital of the District, where the most representative public and private institutions are located.

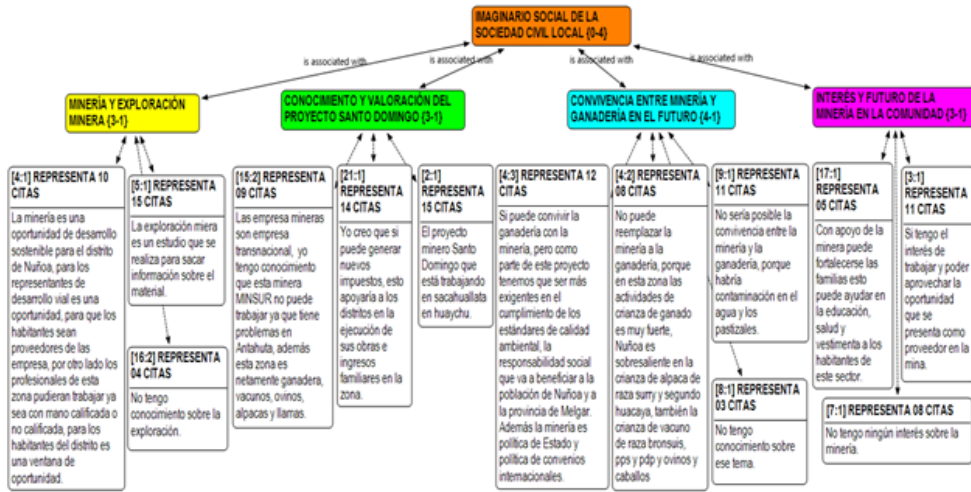
Social Imaginary of the Regional and National Institutions

Officials from public and private institutions state that mining is a productive activity that contributes to the country's development.

Regarding the social imaginary of the Regional and Municipal institutions, referring to the knowledge and valuation of the Santo Domingo project, having generic information on the mining project, they point out that the State holds meetings with some community organizations but believe that this is not enough and recommend that there should be a direct and close relationship with the actors: community and company.

The projects are generally located in rural areas with complex and heterogeneous dynamics, communities and/or private owners with different socioeconomic profiles and different life strategies, according to Figure 2, managers and officials state from a personal point of view, in the sense that

Figure 2. Semantic Network of the Social Imaginary of the Local Civil Society in the Zone of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project



Source: Own elaboration according to the data processed and analyzed in the Atlas.ti computer program (February, 2018).

the mining company will contribute to the development of the district through the generation of employment for the inhabitants and fulfilling its social responsibility; they also specify that the rural communities that have mining in their territory are benefited with voluntary contributions or with the signing of framework agreements. This dynamic of interaction of the mining company with the local community implies the practice of a modern policy of Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Relations, which promotes the strengthening of public and private institutions in their (Mendoza I. & Rubina Alberto., 2013).

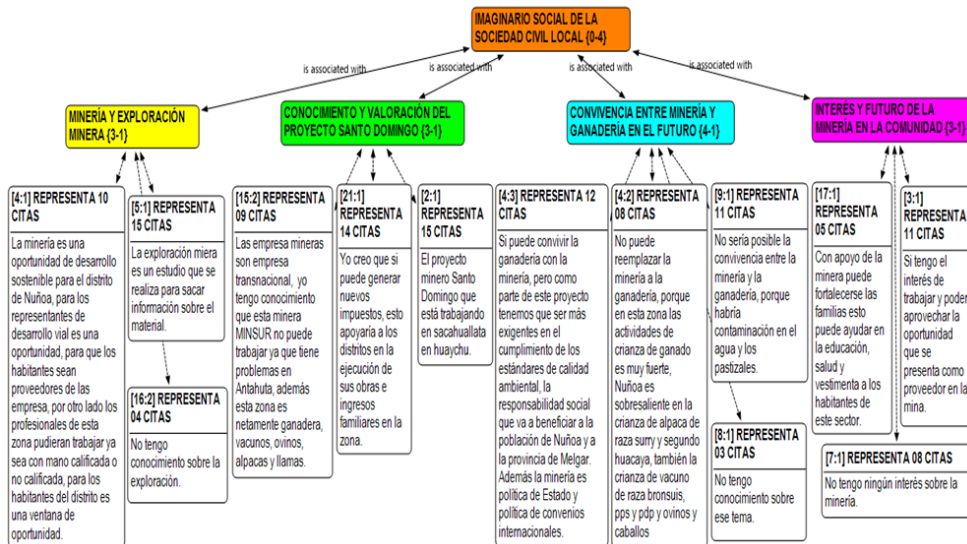
On the other hand, we note that most of the stakeholders maintain that the coexistence between mining and cattle ranching in the future is not possible since both compete for land and water resources. These divergent conceptions are also handled by some representatives of the State institutions, who analyze that mining, agriculture, and cattle ranching as economic activities, have an impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on the environment.

Social imaginary of the local civil society

Most of the interviewees representing the rural communities and individual private landowners of Nuñoa consider the exploration phase to be a study carried out to obtain information on the quantity and type of metallic mineral resources. It is relevant to highlight that a sector of the inhabitants have expectations of mining activity as a development opportunity, as long as it complies with international environmental and social responsibility standards. In their aspirations, they state that in the future when the project enters the production phase, the inhabitants may benefit.

Most of the interviewees from civil society argue that the mining project would contribute greatly to the development of the country, with the disbursement of taxes (canon, over canon, royalties) can favor the inhabitants of the district and of course, it would support the execution of infrastructure works, which can impact the economic income and living standards of families in the area. Regarding the above, (Vera, 2017) maintains that large foreign investors have shown their interest in investing in the mining sector, resulting in an increase in the Mining Canon and consequently, regional and local governments saw increases in their income from this same concept. Likewise, there were increases in royalties, validity rights, voluntary contributions, and contribution to Fondoempleo, among others.

Figure 3. Semantic Network of the Social Imaginary of the Local Civil Society in the Zone of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project



Source: Own elaboration according to the data processed and analyzed in the Atlas.ti computer program (February, 2018).

However, a minority, but important sector of those interviewed maintain that the mining project belongs to MINSUR and is transnational in nature. These residents do not have a positive assessment because they have distorted knowledge that there would be problems between the company and local civil society in the Antauta district; they maintain that Nuñoa is purely based on livestock production, raising cattle, sheep and South American camelids. Regarding the coexistence between mining and livestock in the future. Thus, in Figure 3, most of the interviewed inhabitants do not consider these activities to be antagonistic, but rather complementary, and they maintain that cattle ranching can coexist with mining, but as part of this project, we have to be more demanding in terms of compliance with environmental quality standards and social responsibility.

According to this, (Mucho, 2017) argues that "modern mining in Peru is also recognized for providing one of the best salaries to workers and executives. Its performance is characterized by a true transfer of technology, by the design and execution of actions aimed at environmental care, as well as the substantial improvement of the living conditions of the populations in the areas of influence of its operations" (P. 2).

Now we will see the other side of these versions, for a considerable sector of the interviewees, it is not possible for mining and cattle ranching to coexist, because they strongly consider the water and pastures contamination, this assessment comes from the inhabitants of the Pasanacollo Town Center. In the analysis subcategory regarding the interest and future of mining in the community, mining exploration projects naturally bring with them expectations and interests in the area of direct and indirect influence of the project. Thus, private investment would bring with it both benefits and concerns; this ambivalence is not alien to the inhabitants of the Nuñoa district.

Considering that the social imaginary, according to (Castoriadis, 1975), implies the sense and meanings socially instituted in a given society, most of the interviewees maintain that the social actors have their own interests, under this logic they dynamize their actions, which is why the interests of the local population are diverse, such as: strengthening education and health services through the provision of infrastructure, furniture, laboratories, among others. Finally, an important group of informants maintains that they have no interest in the mining activity, which would indicate their rejection of

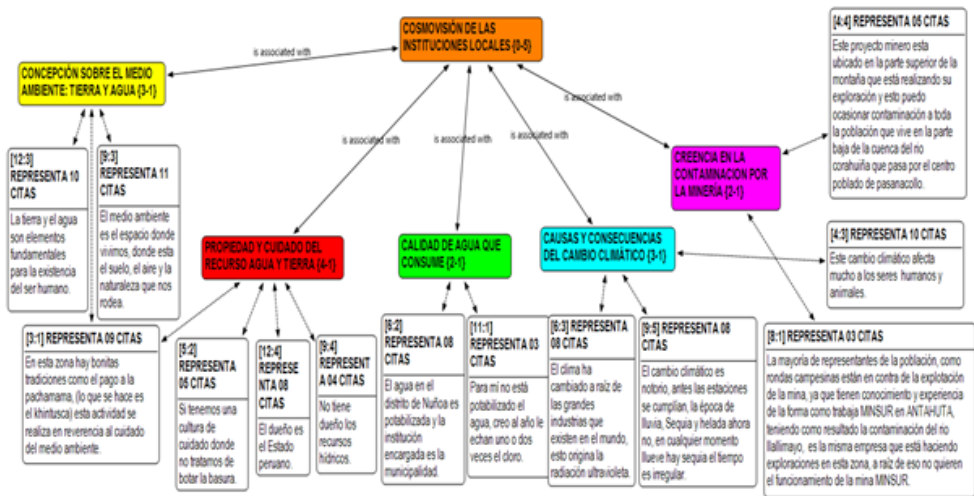
mining activity, and would also explain that this group of local social actors would have their occupation or employment in other sectors or economic activities. While most of the interviewees have an interest in the execution of the mining project.

The worldview of local institutions on the environment in the Mining Exploration Project.

Considering that the worldview of local institutions on environmental conservation is an important aspect to identify the behavior of social, institutional, and political actors, Figure 4 shows the conceptions of institutional actors regarding the environment: land and water, where three orientations were identified in the social imaginary of institutional actors. On the one hand, most of the actors interviewed affirm that the environment is a living space, made up of soil, air, and the surrounding nature. On the other hand, an important group of the institutional actors interviewed conceive the environment as a dimension where land and water are fundamental elements for the existence of human beings. Finally, another important group of the institutional actors interviewed has maintained that the environment, in the intervention zone of the mining exploration project, is understood as that close and dynamic relationship between man and nature, which is expressed through Andean cultural practices, such as the payment to the holy land Pachamama, with the purpose of recognizing, thanking and taking care of the environment. Regarding the above, (Pérez, Julián. Gardey, 2009) defines the environment as a system formed by natural and artificial elements, that are interrelated and modified by human action.

In terms of social dynamics, the population of Nuñoa is characterized by ancestral traditions, such as the payment to the holy land, to the hills called apus, to the sun, the moon, water, etc. (Calderon, 2012). Local authorities are no strangers to these customs as they are part of the cosmological system, even making use of rituals in the opening of a building and the inauguration. At the beginning of each day, whether of an agricultural, livestock, social, political, or even religious nature, it is customary to perform the "Challacha". No work begins without a toast to the Pacha-mama, either with coca leaves or by pouring wine or other liquor (Calderon, 2012).

Figure 4. Semantic Network of the Worldview of Local Institutions on Environmental Conservation in the Area of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project



Source: Own elaboration according to the data processed and analyzed in the Atlas.ti computer program (February, 2018)

Regarding the subcategory of analysis of the ownership and care of water and land resources, most of the interviewees agree in indicating that water is property of the State, therefore, there would be no individual property over the water resource, this perspective of the stakeholders is related to the

current regulations on the matter. According to the Water Resources Law, Law No. 29338, in its Article 2°: water is the patrimony of the nation, the dominion over it is inalienable and imprescriptible, it is a good of public use and its administration can only be granted and exercised in harmony with the common good.

Regarding the quality of the water they consume, most of the local authorities point out that the water consumed by the urban population is drinkable, compared to the rural area, which consumes water from springs or underground, often raw water.

According to the worldview of the District's institutional actors on the causes and consequences of climate change, they mostly refer that there are negative effects, both for humans and animals. Likewise, another important group of interviewees maintains that the seasons are no longer the same as they used to be; making an introspection of the weather and climate we realize that at any moment it rains, there is drought and frost, and the weather is very changeable. All these effects and changes in the behavior of the climate in the world, according to another group of interviewees, it is a consequence of the presence and development of large industries in the world that are generating ultraviolet radiation. Climate change is in essence also a social problem (Smith, 2009). In relation to the belief in pollution from mining, most of the interviewees have reservations about the exploration of the Santo Domingo mining project because they believe that since it is located in the headwaters of the basin, it will generate pollution in the lower parts. In this way, local and community authorities relate mining activities to environmental contamination.

For (Ortega & Molinuevo Martínez de Bujo, 2001) the existence of beliefs are not ideas. These beliefs exist independently of the individual. One is in the belief, and if we want to investigate a society we must pay attention to the system of beliefs it possesses.

Cosmovision of the local civil society

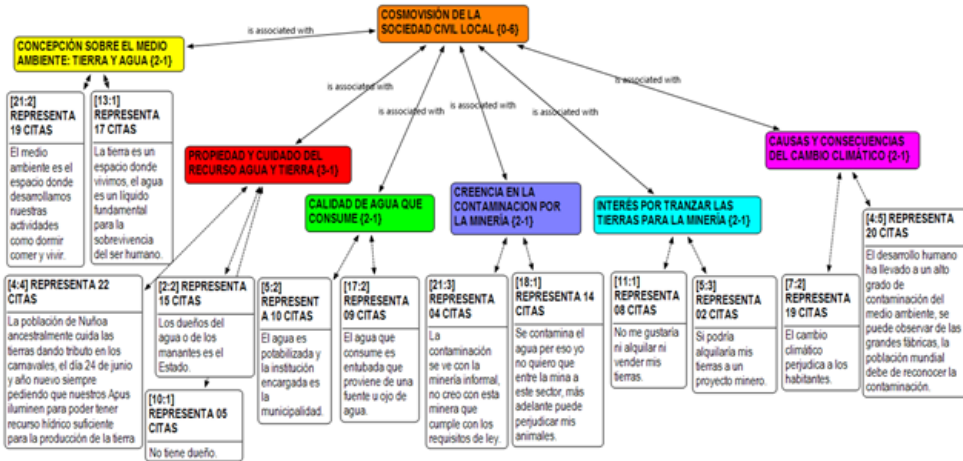
Regarding the subcategory of analysis of the conception of the environment: land and water (see Figure 5), it can be observed that most of the inhabitants refer to the environment as the space where they carry out their agricultural activities, where they live, sleep and eat. This finding is related to the Andean cosmovision, understood as the set of beliefs, ideas, visions, utopias, and dreams about the preservation of certain natural resources from the perspective of the Andean culture.

In the Andean worldview (Palacios, 2005), man must always be in harmony with nature; or as stated by (Hoogesteger, 2014), communities throughout the Andes tend to have strong organizational structures and integrated forms of collective action that dynamically maintain their identity, traditions and access to natural resources, especially water and land. In this sense, for (Budds & Hinojosa-Valencia, 2012)) water is not only a material resource that satisfies the basic needs and economic activities of local inhabitants, but it is also a cultural resource that incorporates different meanings, i.e., there is a symbolic meaning of water in the Andean Aymara and Quechua population, a cultural and spiritual meaning. For the inhabitants of rural areas, the subjectivity that they develop towards nature is significant, since water is a living being and is also a life-giving being that fertilizes the land every year for the recreation of life.

Regarding the ownership and care of water and land resources, local and community stakeholders in the Nuñoa district state that the owner of water resources is the State (Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2009). Whereas a minority group of those interviewed from local civil society affirms that the water resource has no owner. We believe that the Local Water Authority - Melgar should provide training to strengthen the capacities of the population.

The worldview of local civil society regarding the belief in mining contamination. Figure 5 shows that the vast majority are afraid that mining will contaminate the water, pointing out that contamination can start with humans and later with animals, for these reasons, the local civil society actors do not agree with the extractive activity. On the other hand, a minority group of stakeholders maintain that the contamination is caused by informal mining in the region. Mining companies that

Figure 5. Semantic Network of Local Civil Society’s Cosmivision on Environmental Conservation in the Zone of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project.



Source: according to data processed and analyzed in Atlas.ti software (February, 2018).

qualify under the rules and norms established by the State believe that they cannot pollute.

Regarding the interest in trading land for mining, the vast majority of local and community stakeholders say that they would not like to rent or sell their land to companies, and a minority sector of those interviewed say that they could rent their land to a mining project. Undoubtedly, these criteria have an explanation because Nuñoa is a district forged as a result of agricultural production, mainly livestock.

Stakeholders’ perceptions on the role of the State in the area of influence of the mining exploration project.

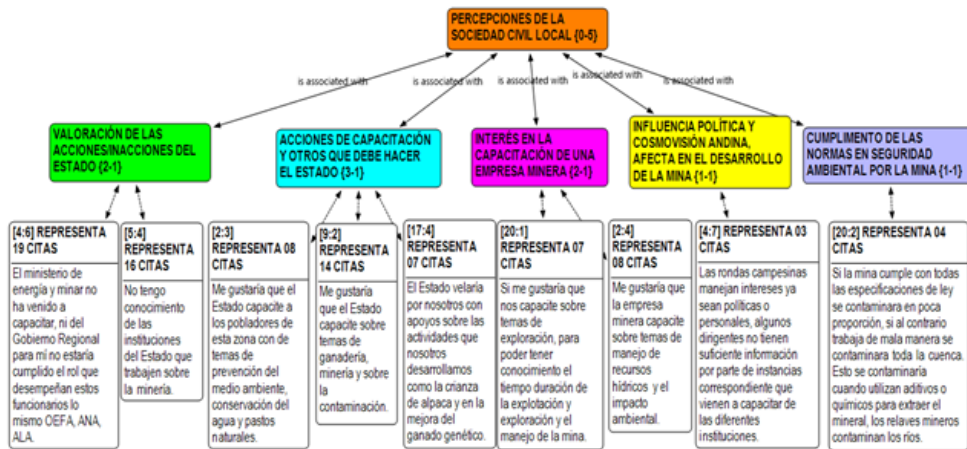
The perceptions of local civil society actors regarding the valuation of State actions/inactions can be seen in Figure 6, where most of the interviewees state that there is an absence of institutions representing the State in the intervention zone of the mining exploration project, such as: the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the OEFA, the ANA, the ALA, etc. According to Carrillo (n/d), the State’s participation has been directed more to solving the problems generated by the extractive companies (outbreak of conflicts), than towards identifying and attacking the causes that generate the conflicts; therefore, the institutions must firmly, autonomously and credibly confront environmental and social problems.

Regarding training and other actions that the State should take, the majority of those interviewed said that they would like the State to train them on three main topics: first, on livestock; second, on mining; and third, on environmental pollution.

On the perceptions of local civil society actors regarding the political influence and Andean worldview in the development of mining, a minority group of those interviewed stated that the peasant patrols manage particular or political interests. According to (Damonte, 2013) the presence of these projects has reactivated local political mobilization, contributing to the emergence of community political leadership, and strengthening political representation in these spaces.

Regarding compliance with environmental safety standards by mining companies Figure 6 shows that an important sector of those interviewed stated that if a mining company complies with all the legal specifications in the exploitation or production process, it would pollute less, which means that it would be within the permissible limits. If the exploitation process does not comply with the parameters

Figure 6. Semantic Network of Local Civil Society Perceptions on the Role of the State in the Zone of Influence of the Mining Exploration Project



Source: Own elaboration according to data processed and analyzed in Atlas.ti software (February, 2018).

established in the current regulations, then it would generate pollution problems, which the inhabitants are afraid of.

Regarding the actions/inactions of the State the representatives of local institutions manifest that the State has no presence in the mining exploration sites. In this sense, the exploration mining company arrives before the State to the communities (Villanueva, 2018). According to the interviewees, the State’s responsibility is to inform and act on the environmental impacts that mining generates and it is also their responsibility. The participation of the population is very important in training programs related to environmental issues (MINEM, 2008).

The Santo Domingo project operates within the framework of Peruvian legislation. Regional stakeholders point out that the institutions responsible for the mining sector are: MINEM, DREM, Ministry of Environment, OEFA, OSINERMINING, Public Ministry, and the Ministry of Interior. Regional officials did not provide in depth the functions of each institution, which would indicate that the State is inactive in mining matters.

Regarding capacity building, they point out that it should be carried out jointly and in coordination with local authorities and representatives of civil society. The DREM has been working on training events on issues related to environmental contamination and exploitation of mining projects. The Local Water Authority (ALA) also monitored the water resources at the Santo Domingo project and found that the acidity of the water in this area is caused by nature.

Regarding compliance with regulations, most conclude that all extractive activities must have an environmental certificate and social license (Ministerio de Energía Minas, 2009).

Finally, an important group of regional stakeholders states that the representatives of community social organizations (peasant patrols) have political interests.

The perceptions of local civil society actors show that there is an absence of the State in the project intervention zone. According to (Carrillo, 2011), the State’s participation has been directed more to solve the problems generated by extractive companies than to identify and attack the causes that generate conflicts.

Regarding training actions, interviewees say that they would like the State to train them on three main topics: livestock, mining, and environmental pollution. The population living in the high mountain areas of the Puno region is characterized by camelid raising (Enriquez, 2015), such as the case of Nuñoa.

According to (Damonte, 2013), the presence of these projects has reactivated local political mobilization, contributing to the emergence of communal political leadership, and strengthening political representation in these spaces. These changes have resulted in the emergence of the "New Rural-ity". This phenomenon is defined by the changes that have occurred in the rural sector as a result of globalization and neoliberal policies (Kay, 2007).

4. Conclusions

The social imaginary of local, regional, and national stakeholders involved in the area of influence of the exploration project is varied. On the one hand, the community social actors and local institutions, for the most part, are reluctant to the mining project, they maintain that mining cannot coexist with and replace livestock and agriculture. On the other hand, the actors of regional and national institutions consider that mining would generate opportunities for improvement and communal and local development.

Also, to a large extent, the worldview of community stakeholders and local institutions maintain that the preservation of the environment at the community and local levels is based on a harmonious relationship, expressed in a series of Andean rituals or cultural practices, such as the payment to the holy land pacha-mama.

The perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the area of influence of the mining exploration project regarding the functions, actions, or inactions of the State have two orientations. First, community stakeholders and local institutions perceive the absence or inaction of the State in the area of the mining exploration project; this situation leads the inhabitants to demand information and training on mining, environmental, social development, and economic-productive development issues, to the mining company. Second, the actors of the regional and national institutions perceive that the State assumes the regulatory role of mining activities and the exploitation of natural resources, through norms and laws.

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