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Water as More than Commons or Commodity: Understanding Water Management Practices in Yanque, Peru

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ABSTRACT: Global warming, shrinking glaciers and water scarcity pose challenges to the governance of fresh water in Peru. On the one hand, Peru's water management regime and its legal framework allow for increased private involvement in water management, commercialisation and, ultimately, commodification of water. On the other hand, the state and its 2009 Water Resource Law emphasise that water is public property and a common good for its citizens. This article explores how this seeming paradox in Peru's water politics unfolds in the district of Yanque in the southern Peruvian Andes. Further, it seeks to challenge a commons/commodity binary found in water management debates and to move beyond the underlying hegemonic view of water as a resource. Through analysing state-initiated practices and practices of a more-than-human *commoning* – that is, practices not grounded in a human/nature divide, where water and other non-humans participate as sentient persons – the article argues that in Yanque many versions of water emerge through the heterogeneous practices that are entangled in water management.

KEYWORDS: Water, water management, commodification, more-than-human commoning, uncommons, Andes, Peru

INTRODUCTION

At a community meeting in 2016, in the farming district of Yanque in the southern Peruvian Andes, the water users discussed their struggles with water access for their crops. "Water is life!" (*iAgua es vida!*), one of them stated, indicating the importance of water to the life of humans, plants and animals. Later, at the same meeting, the president of one of the two local water user commissions exclaimed: "Water is money!" (*iAgua es plata!*), as an explanation for why they did not have enough. His statement referred to the tariff the water users had to pay to use water from irrigation infrastructure and subterranean sources, the fee required for individual water licences, and the economic valuing of water that these payments implied. In Yanque, water is a life-giving substance that Yanqueños manage communally and receive through reciprocal relationships with mountain beings, or *Apus*. However, water is also officially owned and supplied by the Peruvian state, which requires that water users must pay a tariff for the use of both state and locally run water infrastructure, in accordance with the Water Resource Law (*Ley de Recursos Hídricos N°29338*).

The two statements above suggest that in Yanque people relate to water in a variety of ways. Water is life, has life, and is considered to be both a commodity and a common good. The fact that in some instances water is related to as a person and in other instances it is managed as a common good does not exclude it, in still other situations, from being exchanged as an economic asset. In recent debates on water governance, notions of 'the commons' are deployed to counter privatisation and commodification of water (Bakker, 2007; Carrozza and Fantini, 2016; Distaso and Ciervo, 2011; Miroso and Harris, 2012; Perera, 2015; Sultana and Loftus, 2015). Many scholarly writings on global water policies and water management regimes have been preoccupied with discussions about the tension between privatisation

and commercialisation of water on the one hand and community management and the human right to water on the other (Baer, 2014; Bakker, 2007; Carrozza and Fantini, 2016; Distaso and Ciervo, 2011; Galaz, 2004). In these writings, it becomes apparent that a commons/commodity binary underlies water governance debates. The aim of this article is to complicate this binary and to rethink the conceptualisation of commons and commodity in conversation with anthropological literature and using empirical material gathered in the course of 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2016 in Yanque, Colca Valley.

Valderrama and Escalante (1988) have pointed out that in Yanque water is a being, and Stensrud (2014, 2019) has followed by arguing that in the Colca Valley water can be both an abstract resource and a relational being. My ethnographic material supports these findings. Further, in different situations, practices and places during my fieldwork, water emerges as both a sentient being and a passive object, as well as anything in between. In addition, water is often a medium for interactions between humans and mountain beings (Apus), in a relationship whereby these beings provide Yanqueños with water for irrigation through sustained reciprocal relations. By virtue of its will, water cannot be fully controlled by humans, and its specific material qualities also complicate total containment. Its ability to flow, connect, disconnect, transform and hide (Linton, 2010; Orlove and Caton, 2010; Strang, 2015) makes water a challenge to find, capture and control for human use. Moreover, powerful agents such as the state, public and private organisations, water beings, and Apus ultimately regulate Yanqueños' access to water.

In this article, I argue that while water in Yanque can be *close* to a commodity and *close* to a commons, it also resists the neat commons/commodity binary since it can be both commodity and commons simultaneously and can take many other social and material forms. Further, I seek to move beyond the hegemonic view of water-as-resource that I argue underlies both sides of the binary. To consider other versions of water, the article makes use of the concepts of *commoning* and *uncommons* (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017, 2018; de la Cadena, 2018). My use of these terms is an attempt to grapple with an analytical dilemma: how to retain the specificity of divergent – and often hierarchically positioned – ways of relating to water, while also revealing how these ways are entangled in practice and how the same people can relate to water both as a sentient being and as a passive commodifiable resource. Present in Yanque are practices that commodify water (enclosing the commons) and a notion of water as a national commons. Both are found in the water management regime of the state, which portrays water as a natural resource separate from the humans who use it. However, we also find processes of commoning that allow for water to emerge as more than a resource and open up a space for more-than-human interactions in water management. Commoning helps me to conceptualise 'the commons' in processual terms and to include other-than-humans as active participants in community making (see Bollier and Helfrich, 2014, 2015; Federici, 2014; Linebaugh, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010). I use commoning to refer to vernacular water management practices in Yanque that are oriented towards the particularity of that place and the qualitative more-than-human relations that unfold there, while I use uncommons as a broader concept that includes both the specific commoning in Yanque and other divergent practices related to the national commons and commodification initiated by state policies. This article contributes to the debate concerning water and the commons/commodity distinction (Bakker, 2007) by reconceptualising the commons and demonstrating how water shifts between divergent commons and commodification practices, while also opening up a space for additional versions of water.¹

In the first section of this article, I discuss conceptualisations of commons and commodity and reflect on how these two concepts have been referred to in water management debates and scholarly literature. I then introduce the water situation in Peru, the district of Yanque, and the fieldwork I did there. The

¹ My approach to multiple versions of water draws on Annemarie Mol's (2002) study of how atherosclerosis is enacted as multiple – more than one, less than many – through different practices and relations in a hospital. In the course of looking into a range of water management practices in Yanque, more than one version of water unfolded; water emerged as different things depending on who and what were involved in the practice.

subsequent section presents the Yanque case by describing various water management practices and events where different versions of water emerge. The empirical descriptions from Yanque are followed by a discussion on how these heterogeneous practices relate to one another and to notions of commodification and the commons, while also exceeding them. The article concludes by arguing that water is more than commons or commodity in Yanque, since it can also emerge as a being through more-than-human water management practices.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF COMMONS AND COMMODITY

The commons has often been defined as a resource (or pool of resources) that is shared and not subject to private property rights. For instance, in Hardin's (1968) classical article "The Tragedy of the Commons", the commons is a communally shared resource that no one owns and to which everyone living in a certain area has access. Hardin argues, however, that a commons is always vulnerable to individuals who act out of self-interest at the expense of the interest of the community. Thus, the inevitable fate of a commons is overuse and environmental degradation and, to avoid this tragedy, resources must be controlled to a certain degree (ibid). In her writings on the commons, Elinor Ostrom (1990) points out (contrary to Hardin) that common-pool resources are not necessarily free for everyone to use as they desire. On the contrary, she argues, most communal resource management is largely institutionalised and thus regulated. Trawick's (2003) monograph from the Andes confirms Ostrom's point by describing successful water management that is based on strict social organisation by communal institutions. Trawick contends that "people do not have an inherent tendency to behave 'tragically'" (ibid, 2003: 298); rather, state policies and capitalist practices initiate 'the tragedy of the commons'. Despite studies that are positive towards communally organised resource management, principles in water management have tended to stress alternatives to the commons. At different points since the 1950s the Peruvian state, and international institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, have encouraged two alternative solutions to common resource management: state control, and privatisation and marketisation. In this, they have followed international tendencies in water governance (Trawick, 2003: 300-304).

Recent debates about water management have conceptualised the commons as the opposite of private ownership and state control. In contrast to international management strategies, however, scholars and activists have used the term commons to highlight community management of water as being the best way to secure fair water access (Carrozza and Fantini, 2016; Distaso and Ciervo, 2011; Bakker, 2007). The Italian water movement, for instance, draws on a notion of the commons to contest water privatisation (Carrozza and Fantini, 2016). Similarly, anti-neo-liberal activists point to the commons as a valid alternative to neo-liberal efforts to commercialise and privatise water (Bakker, 2007). Further, in such water governance debates, alter-globalisation activists put forward 'water as a commons' as the antithesis to the commodification of water pushed by market environmentalist reforms (Bakker, 2007; Carrozza & Fantini, 2016). This literature identifies a contrast between 'water as a commons' and 'water as a commodity' in discussions on water management.

These debates emphasise commodification as entailing greater involvement of private companies in the water sector at the expense of community autonomy. Private ownership and individual user rights to limited water resources make equitable access more difficult, which in turn leads to the buying and selling of water and thus it is becoming valued in terms of money (Bakker, 2007). In general, commodities are often associated with capitalism and neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005) and closely linked to marketisation, commercialisation and privatisation (Bakker, 2007).

Anthropological analyses of economic systems have often contrasted commodities with gifts. Commodities are referred to as having a use value and an exchange value implying an exact quantification (Gregory, 2015: paragraph 3). According to Karl Marx (1965 ([1867]: 91) commodity exchanges are short-term, abstracted transactions of private property, in contrast to gift exchanges which are characterised

by long-term reciprocal relationships. By arguing that commodities are not embedded in social relations of mutual dependence, Marx points to the alienable nature of commodities.

Many anthropologists have problematised dual categorisations of economic systems (see, among others, Appadurai, 1988; Harris, 1989; Parry and Bloch, 1989; Tsing, 2013). In literature on the Andes, Harris (1989) has identified dichotomous understandings of economic forms, where Andean trade circulation has been contrasted to capitalistic commodification. Other anthropologists have contributed similar critiques of such oppositions in their ethnographies from the Andes (see Gose, 1986; Ødegaard, 2010). I want to continue this tradition of challenging dichotomies in economic exchange and resource management by arguing that water management in the Peruvian Andes is another instance where commodification processes happen alongside – and in relation to – non-commodification processes. The case from Yanque presented in this article demonstrates that features of commons and characteristics of commodity are not necessarily contradictory. Examining the binary of commons and commodity can be fruitful in pointing to contrasting water governance approaches, but they are not necessarily separate in practice.

Further, the same water governance regimes that are involved in the commodification and privatisation of water are, in many cases, also highlighting water user participation in local water affairs (Bakker, 2007), and actively present water as a common good. As Blaser and de la Cadena observe, "Given that neo-extractivist activities [in South America] often involve the destruction and/or enclosure of 'commons', it is not surprising to see neo-extractivist governments depicting them as 'common goods' to be appropriated by corporations, or the state, in pursuit of the national 'common good'" (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017: 185). In line with this, the Peruvian government implements a water governance regime that emphasises water as a common good while also encouraging private involvement in the water sector (commonly seen as destructive of commons) and legislates that all water users must pay a tariff for the right to use water from irrigation infrastructure (ANA, 2010). Thus, it portrays water as a common good while (paradoxically) also promoting the logic of commodification. Moreover, both these versions of water depart from the modern conceptualisation of water as a resource. Going beyond the coupling of commons and commodity allows us to see other emerging versions of water, since in Yanque and other places water is more than a resource.

Before I illustrate how the modern Peruvian management regime is practised in Yanque and describe how it is entangled with a more place-specific orientation where other-than-humans take part in water management, I introduce the context of climate change and water scarcity, the district of Yanque in Southern Peru, and my fieldwork there.

BACKGROUND

Populations in many corners of the world struggle with insufficient fresh water due to global climate change and maldistribution (Whiteley et al., 2008). One of these places is Peru, where global warming is causing accelerated glacier melt (Bolin, 2009; Carey, 2010; Rabatel et al., 2013), which means that important water reserves are disappearing. This is a serious environmental problem, one that is being experienced to varying degrees in different parts of the country because of Peru's diverse geography and climate and the unequal distribution of water. Further, the shortage of fresh water is coupled with economic growth, industrial agriculture and higher demands for water, which place further pressure on existing water sources. At the expense of those living in the highlands closer to water sources, various irrigation infrastructure projects direct water to arid places near the coast in order to secure agricultural production and economic prosperity there (Lynch, 2012). Since the 1980s, the state-initiated Majes Canal in the Arequipa region has transported water from water reserves above the Colca Valley to arid coastal areas near the Majes Pampa (see Gelles, 2000; Paerregaard, this issue; Stensrud, this issue; Ullberg, this issue). Colca Valley water users are allowed to tap water from the canal as it passes their communities.

Yanque is one of the districts in the Colca Valley that draws some water from the Majes Canal. In addition, an extensive network of smaller canals transport water from streams and springs originating in the mountains on both sides of the valley. Some of the water canals have been used for more than 1000 years (Trawick, 2003: 41). This intricate water infrastructure testifies to a history of scarce water and advanced water management.² Since it rains only three months of the year, agriculture depends on irrigation that uses glacial meltwater. The disappearing glaciers are thus causing increasingly serious problems in water access. Since the 1970s, more than 70 percent of the glacial area in Peru has melted, while in the Chila mountain range in the Arequipa region the figure is as high as 99 percent (INAIGEM, 2016). Hence, various actors are making efforts to carefully manage the available water and to mitigate the consequences of global climate change. The Peruvian government implements laws and policies to meet the challenges posed by global warming and water scarcity, while small-scale farmers in the district of Yanque work individually and collectively to secure enough water for their crops.

The 2117 inhabitants of Yanque (INEI, 2017) are divided into two communities – Urinsaya and Anansaya – that have land on opposite sides of the Colca River, which runs through the valley. Hence, they have separate water sources and manage their water independently of each other through the Yanque Anansaya Water User Commission and the Yanque Urinsaya Water User Commission. While the communities more or less autonomously govern the water flowing from the surrounding mountains, the regional government along with public and private organisations govern the water that comes from the Majes Canal (Paerregaard et al., 2016). In monthly meetings in Pedregal (a coastal town in Arequipa), regional water management is discussed, and amounts of Majes Canal water to be allocated to different user groups is negotiated by AUTODEMA (*Autoridad Autónoma de Majes* – the public agency that operates the Majes Canal on behalf of the Regional Government), ALA (the Local Water Authority that is a subdivision of the National Water Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation), JUVC (*Junta de Usuarios Valle del Colca* – a private organisation representing the Colca Valley water users), and three additional water user organisations (Stensrud, this issue). AUTODEMA, ALA, JUVC, and Yanque’s two water user commissions – a blend of public, private and community organisations – are the main actors involved in the governance of Yanque’s water resources. In addition, many water users in Yanque recognise sentient earth beings as playing important roles in local water management.

During my fieldwork in the Colca Valley in 2016, I worked with people from all these organisations, although I focused my attention on water users in Yanque. I lived in Yanque from January to December 2016, first in Anansaya and then with a family in Urinsaya. During this time, I conducted participant observation in cultivated fields, public spaces, and homes. I attended community meetings, offering ceremonies, and water allocation meetings. Further, I spent time in the provincial capital of Chivay where ALA (the Local Water Authority) and JUVC (the Colca Valley Water User Organisation) have their offices and where local water leaders and water users negotiate water issues with representatives working for these organisations. Thus, my data collection consisted mainly of participant observation and informal interviews, primarily with Yanque water users and water leaders but also with state agents, workers in private and public water organisations, local politicians, engineers and other water experts. The fieldwork in Yanque was conducted as part of the work for my doctoral thesis and this article is based on empirical material resulting from this fieldwork.

MANAGING WATER IN YANQUE

On 1 August 2016, a group of eight men was gathered near the foot of Mismi, the most important Apu, who gives water to the farmers of Yanque Urinsaya. They were facing the strong sun, breathing in the cold air of the crisp Andean morning, and sharing alcoholic beverages with each other and important

² See Mitchell and Guillet’s (1994) edited book on the complexity and variety of highland irrigation systems in the Andes.

earth beings³ by finger snapping some of the drink into the air or onto the ground, making a *t'inka* (libation) to quench the thirst of the Apus and *Pachamama* (translated to Mother Earth or World Mother, with some loss). The group consisted of community authorities from Yanque Urinsaya, including the president of the Community of Yanque Urinsaya, the president and the *regidor* (water allocator) of the Yanque Urinsaya Water User Commission, the communal authority of law and order in Yanque, and another member of the management group of Yanque Urinsaya Water User Commission. Also present were the three *tios* ('uncles')⁴ who were in charge of leading the ceremony. Gifts were offered and the Apu was fed in order to ask Mismi for a continuous flow of water. One of the *tios* arranged coca seeds, maize grains in different colours, and the Andean herb *kunuqa* on a colourful piece of woven textile, preparing the first of many *platos* (plates) that were given to Mismi that day. Meanwhile, one of the other *tios* started the fire where the plates were burned as the completion of each offering. The smoke from the fire would reach Mismi who would receive the gift and the messages that accompanied it through the wind. In the meantime, the remainder of the men present formed small pieces of llama fat between their fingers and blew at them three times so that "the water does not take unwished paths", then added the fat to the first plate. "I have great respect for Father Mismi who gives us life", one of the authorities stated.

This *pago* or *pagachu* (Spanish and Quechua for payment) is considered to be a payment to Tata Mismi, the mountain being, and to water (*al agua*). The water referred to here is not simply any kind of water, but the particular water that comes from Tata Mismi. Among Yanqueños, the name Mismi refers to both a mountain and a mountain being (Apu), as well as a canal and a water spring. This *pago/pagachu* was completed on the first day of an annual four-day trip called *Yarqa Hasp'iy*,⁵ during which the water users of Yanque Urinsaya clean the 24.5-kilometre-long canal that transports water from the foot of Mismi at approximately 5000 metres, down to Yanque and its fields at 3400 metres. Over the four days, nearly 40 men work their way down the canal, cleaning it out with digging bars and shovels and repairing leaks with grass and stones. Although the good will of Apus and water beings is essential for water to reach the fields of Yanque, water's material properties are also important for smooth transportation. Water can freeze at the high altitudes, evaporate, leak out of the canal, soak into the ground, connect to other materials, or because of gravity move in a different direction than desired. Water's relationship to the environment and to specific human and other-than-human beings affects the water's volume and paths. Maintenance work is important to prevent water from escaping on the way from Mismi to Yanque. Even so, not all the water given by Mismi will reach the fields.

While the water users were diligent in their cleaning of the canal, the *tios* in charge of making *pagos/pagachus* walked slowly and steadily through a rocky landscape broken up by patches of marshland, stopping at specific places to give offerings of corn, coca leaves, llama fat, dry llama foetuses and herbs to Apus and water bodies. These water bodies are also considered to be beings (Paerregaard, 2013) who can think, are sentient, and respond to human behaviour (Stensrud, 2014). One of these beings was Mama Umahala, who is a woman as well as a spring that is manifested in a specific place in the landscape. She gives Yanque Urinsaya some of the water that runs in the Mismi Canal. However, she can also be furious and direct her anger towards Yanqueños if they do not respect her desires. She and other sentient earth beings thus have ambivalent relationships with humans; they can cause danger but are also important sources of water (Valderrama and Escalante, 1988). For this reason, Yanqueños have

³ In Quechua, these beings are often referred to as *tirakuna* – especially in Cusco –, which can be translated as 'earth beings' (Allen, 1988; de la Cadena, 2015). While they mostly are spoken of by use of their proper names in Yanque today, I use the term 'earth beings' to refer to them in plural.

⁴ Earlier, the ritual leader was called *Yana* (Valderrama and Escalante, 1988), but during the *pagachu* (payment) to Tata Mismi in August 2016, both the ritual leader and his two assistants were referred to as the *tios*.

⁵ See Valderrama and Escalante (1988) for extensive ethnographic descriptions of all the water rituals performed in Yanque in the early 1980s.

great respect for these beings in everyday life and especially during the Yarqa Hasp'iy, when they are closer to them.

After Yanque Urinsaya completed that year's Yarqa Hasp'iy with communal work, ritual cleaning, offerings and festivities, the agricultural season began with the first round of irrigation. This involves frequent communal meetings (*asambleas*) at which Yanqueños raise general water management issues, and water allocation meetings (*regimens*) held several days a week at which they agree on daily irrigation schedules. On a Sunday in September 2016, a morning allocation session extended into a communal meeting in the outdoor locale of Urinsaya Water User Commission. The farmers in need of water for their crops circled around the regidor in charge of allocating water from Mismi. Usually, a second regidor is there to allocate water from Sifón, a canal that transports water from the Majes Canal, but unfortunately, this canal had collapsed in an earthquake on 14 August. As a result, there was even less water than usual that September, which resulted in a delay in the irrigation schedule. The regidor tried his best to distribute water to those whose turn it was, by asking them about the size of their fields, when they would sow, and what types of crops they had. He wrote down the schedule for the following days in his notebook and checked if the farmers had participated in the required communal work. Several of the people around him interfered in his decision-making by questioning the irrigation order and the length of time that others had access to water.

When the allocation was finished, more water users arrived to participate in the subsequent communal meeting. The communally appointed regidor stepped back and the formally elected president took over to lead the meeting. Most of the discussion that followed revolved around the challenges of accessing enough water after the earthquake. Along the wall in the open locale, one could spot ten large tubes that the Water User Commission had received from the regional government for temporary reconstruction of the Sifón Canal, but at least ten more tubes were needed. Urinsaya had also been left to themselves to figure out how to complete the work. During the open discussion, one man stated: "The water is the state's, they say. And who is the state? The people. That's what they say". Other people raised their voices, questioning why the state did not help them further with this and other water issues when supposedly the water in Peru, which formally belongs to the state, should benefit all citizens. After all, they did pay a yearly water tariff. Since no representatives from the state were there to answer, the accusations faded out. Instead, those present agreed on how and when to arrange the *faena* (communal work) to finish building a temporary Sifón Canal, in order to reduce the amount of time they would be left without sufficient water from the Majes Canal.

The quantity they normally draw from the Majes Canal is carefully calculated, based on their water demands, the amount of water available in the Condorama Dam (where the canal starts), and the demands of other water users. Each water user in Yanque is expected to complete a Cultivation and Irrigation Plan (*Plan de Cultivo y Riego* – PCR) that maps out their irrigation demands as water users in areas served by state water infrastructure projects. PCR is a way of securing a volume of water from the Majes Canal that corresponds to need. However, the volume calculations that theoretically affirm whether there is a surplus or scarcity of water in Yanque do not reflect the reality of water availability as, importantly, the demand calculations are based on a climate diagnosis from 1992-1993 that does not account for changes in weather patterns since then (Boelens and Seemann, 2014: 6). Even so, the water users must still follow the formalities in order to be entitled to water from the Majes Canal.

In September 2016, the president of the Anansaya Water User Commission asked me to assist the water users in completing their PCRs, since many of them could not write. The plan is one step in a set of bureaucratic procedures to formalise water demands and rights.⁶ For the water users to fill in their PCR, they must formally own their land and have paid the latest water tariffs. Some years ago, the government programme PROFODUA (*Programa de Formalización de Derechos de Uso de Agua*) mapped out all the land in Yanque and made a detailed list of landowners, the land they owned, and the water sources they

⁶ For a thorough examination of formalising water policies in Yanque, see Boelens and Seemann (2014).

used. They then assigned group water licences to those who used the same water sources (Boelens and Seemann, 2014). In 2016, the process of bestowing individual water licences commenced, but Yanque water users contested this because it involved a licence fee and because it led to greater individualisation, which challenged collective water management.

On one of the September mornings I devoted to helping Yanqueños complete their PCRs, I settled behind a small table in the office of the Anansaya Water User Commission. Through an open door to the next office, I could see a note board bearing the scribbled words 'water tariff'. A sum of 22 soles per *topo* of land (1 *topo* = 1/3 hectare) was underlined, and some arrows indicated that the tariffs paid in Yanque Anansaya would be divided among JUVC, AUTODEMA (which operates the Majes Canal), ANA (the National Water Authority), and the Yanque Anansaya Water User Commission, to cover the costs of governing water in the area. The water tariff is an individual payment that gives each landowner individual rights to access water through water infrastructure (although Yanqueños communally receive and manage water). Since the tariff is calculated based on the amount of land the water users own (as well as the type of water sources they use), it presupposes formal ownership and documentation of private property, just as the PCR does. In a previous community meeting, the president of the Anansaya Water User Commission used the note board to explain the details of the water tariff, encouraged by representatives from JUVC and ANA. Between 2012 and 2015, an average of 90 percent of water users in Yanque paid their tariff to secure their individual rights to use water (JUVC, 2016).⁷

The first water user who asked me for assistance in filling out her PCR was a woman in her 40s who handed me a small pile of receipts that confirmed that she had paid the latest water tariffs for all the land she owned. I found her name in a book where all Anansaya landowners were listed, and wrote in the plan what she would sow in each of her fields, what sector her land was in, the names of the canals from which she drew water, the dates she planned to sow, and what type of water source she used. When her PCR was completed I gave her a copy, kept a copy for the commission to give to JUVC, and continued with the next water user in line.

While showing me his water tariff receipts, this second water user spoke of his fear that total privatisation of water would entail higher fees, a decrease in community control, and a further upscaling of water governance from communities to the regional and national governments or, worse, private companies. His opinion echoed similar thoughts from other water users in Yanque who believed that privatisation of water would further marginalise vulnerable water users such as themselves. Many water users in Yanque are well aware that while the state continues to claim state governance and encourages community involvement, private companies are increasingly being incorporated into water management services. In the Arequipa region, for instance, a private consortium called Angostura-Siguas S.A. – consisting of a Spanish and a Peruvian company – is contracted to complete the Majes-Siguas Special Project – Stage II, together with the Peruvian state, through AUTODEMA (Ullberg, this issue). As this project aims to increase the volume of water in the Majes Canal and supply its water users (at least those near the coast) with more water, this public-private partnership is directly involved in the water supply system that serves Yanque water users.

Although many Yanqueños fear privatisation and an upscaling of water governance at the expense of communal management, many endorse the options the state system provides them for obtaining more water through formal and informal processes. Thus, state involvement in water management must be understood not only as being negative for highland communities (Bolin, 1994; Guillet, 1994; Mitchell, 1994). Like other people in the Peruvian Andes, Yanqueños both welcome and dismiss different facets of state governance (Rasmussen, 2016). They are ambivalent in their view of the state-initiated practices that move in the direction of commodification. They see the water tariffs they pay as giving them a certain

⁷ While the great majority of Yanque water users pay their tariffs, they do not always conform to the formal practices. They evaluate what parts of the national water policies with which it would benefit them to comply, contest many, and defend their right to retain autonomy over management of local water sources (see also Boelens and Seemann, 2014).

degree of water security but, at the same time, the fact that they have to pay for the use of water puts them in a marginal position compared to other water users with more economic resources.

COMMONS, COMMODIFICATION, AND COMMONING IN YANQUE

In Yanque, water management is a collective affair that relies on participation in communal meetings, communal work, and paying tribute to earth beings. The water used for irrigation is communally received from the Peruvian state through the Majes Canal, and from specific Apus through smaller streams and springs that gather in an extended network of differently sized canals. Further, the regidor distributes water from these canals through the principle of proportionality, which means that each water user receives an amount of water that corresponds to the size of their land, which again determines how much work each farmer devotes to the faenas. Although the regidor is in charge of distributing water, the position rotates and all water users socially control each other's water use, as the morning water allocation meeting described above illustrates. Water use that is not in accordance with community rules leads to social sanctioning such as the cutting off of water or the imposition of fines. Moreover, in the communal meetings everyone has a say and major decisions are taken in plenum, which results in quite long meetings.

These procedures are comparable to those of Trawick's (2003) Andean commons, which are based on water organisation systems dating back to Inca times and even earlier. The Andean communal water management system is characterised by "the right of everyone to a fair share of the most vital resource, strictly proportional to the size of one's property and given to all with the same frequency, provided that it is used responsibly and that corresponding duties to the community are fulfilled" (Trawick, 2003: 291-292). Trawick argues, however, that commercialisation and privatisation initiated by the state and enabled by the historic expansion of haciendas and the capitalist practices of the Spanish elite are responsible for the tragedy of the commons in many parts of the Peruvian Andes. Trawick endorses the principles of equity, reciprocity, proportionality and transparency that, he believes, are the core of successfully managing water as a shared resource in times of scarcity.

In Yanque today, one continues to find many of these principles at play in water management, encouraging each farmer to follow the rules of water distribution since doing so reduces irrigation frequency and thus benefits both the community and individuals (see Trawick, 2003: 295). However, alignment with communal rules and responsibilities alone is not enough to secure individuals' and the community's water access. In addition, one must pay the water tariff, privately own land, possess a water licence, and complete the PCR. Yanqueños thus have responsibilities not only in relation to the community but also to the state and water organisations. Moreover, they have a moral responsibility towards earth beings. In his Andean commons, Trawick (2003) does not address the active role of earth beings in water management, which, at least in Yanque, is significant. Here, sustained interactions with Mismi, Huarancante, Mama Umahala and others are central aspects of communal water management. In Gelles' (2000) rich monograph about water and irrigation in Cabanaconde, a Colca district further downstream from Yanque, he recounts what happens to the management of water in Cabanaconde when water users begin to receive water from the Majes Canal and the state enters into water management. He describes a clash between a local, ritualised mode of water distribution and the state's secular, monetary mode of water management, while also demonstrating how they turn out to be compatible in complex ways in Cabanaconde (see also Paerregaard, this issue). In the case of Yanque, I wish to highlight the deep entanglement of a local and historically contingent mode of water management and a state-initiated mode of water management, both of which centre around ideas of water as a commons although these commons differ.

The idea of water as a public good and national commons in Peru is reflected in the earlier example of the water user who proclaimed that water belongs to the state – which 'they say' is the people – and therefore they as people of Peru should receive more water. In this notion of water as a national

commons, water is considered to be state property and thus a shared public good, which implies that water should benefit all Peruvian citizens. As I have already pointed out, this notion is institutionalised in water policies and the national Water Resource Law (*Ley de Recursos Hídricos N°29338*). The notion of water as a common good put forward in this legal framework assumes a detachment between humans and nature that stands in contrast to the intricate relations between humans and non-humans in Yanque.

To describe what 'water as a commons' encompasses in Yanque, neither the Andean commons described by Trawick (2003) nor the national commons of Peru's water policies are sufficient, since they both imply that water is a resource. Further, they do not allow for acknowledging the more-than-human sociality and communality that are fundamental for grasping water management in Yanque (see also Valderrama and Escalante, 1988). Thus, understanding what goes on in Yanque calls for a reconceptualisation of 'the commons' that goes beyond the resource view of water, and includes water and other sentient beings in a commons that does not assume a disentanglement of humans and non-humans. Inspired by recent attempts in anthropology to conceptualise new versions of 'the commons' (see Bollier and Helfrich, 2014, 2015; Federici, 2014; Linebaugh, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010), I propose that the Yanque commons are better described as *commoning* – a process rather than an objectified resource – that includes other-than-humans who actively take part in the continuous process of *commoning* – of creating community (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017: 186).

The annual offerings to Mismi (for Yanque Urinsaya) and Huarancante (for Yanque Anansaya) are important to ensure that these Apus continue to protect Yanqueños and give them water. Thus, the water given by Mismi and Huarancante is part of a more-than-human social field of mutual obligation where water users, water beings, Apus, and local water leaders negotiate water access through sustained interactions. As Paerregaard (1994) and Treacy (1994) have pointed out, water rituals and canal cleaning are important to produce and sustain unity among people in Colca communities. Moreover, pagos to earth beings also strengthen relations between humans and earth beings (Hirsch, 2017). These practices create and maintain a more-than-human community. Here, community is understood as "'a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of reasonability to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals', rather than to 'a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others' (Federici, 2014: 229)" (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017: 186). Through the offering practices, but also in everyday practices such as irrigation and libation (*t'inka*), human Yanqueños and earth beings communicate with each other.

It is worth mentioning, moreover, that relations and reciprocity between Yanqueños and sentient beings are of a hierarchical character, in that Apus and water beings are more powerful than humans and ultimately have the power to influence human access to water. Thus, earth beings must be cared for to ensure that they collaborate with humans (see also Stensrud, this issue). Through collaborative practices and persistent interactions, humans and non-humans – Apus, water, people, and other elements of the environment – engage in the *commoning* process (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017: 186). Although this process is hierarchical and not thoroughly harmonic, and although it is not antithetical to enclosures of the commons associated with commercialisation practices such as privatisation and commodification of water, it is oriented "toward a more democratic, egalitarian and just constitution of a domain for humans and non-humans" (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017: 190).

Commodification in the Andes is not new. There is a long history of capitalist practices and inclusion of commodities in national and international markets (Gose, 1986). Since the 1902 Peruvian Water Code established private rights to water (Oré et al., 2009: 49) there have been repeated efforts to create a water market in Peru, alongside increased state involvement in water management and despite the 1969 General Water Law confirming water to be the property of the state (Ministerio de Energía y Minas, 1969). In line with recent neo-liberal water management trends and pressure from international lending institutions, the interest in privatising water has increased. Financial assistance of water management projects is believed to enable efficient use of water and economic growth, which the Peruvian water sector attempts to balance with sustainable management and equity in distribution. Along with this we

see a move from collective to individual-use rights, and increased formalisation (see Boelens and Seemann, 2014) and monetary transactions in national water management.

When Yanque water users comply with the state's legal framework to secure water, they both engage in practices that increasingly commodify water and make the state ideas their own. For instance, the PCR they complete translates to a specific volume of water, a quantification that also underlies the tariff they pay and the licence they are expected to obtain. Through the exchange of documents and money between water users and water organisations, water is quantified and treated as specific numbers on paper. This abstract water is what Linton (2010) calls 'modern water', a version of water that implies a detachment from the relations in which it is suspended. Thus, both in the legal framework and through these exchanges – which can be seen as steps towards commodification – water is reduced to an abstraction one must pay for. Does that mean that water has become a commodity in Yanque?

The water that comes from the Majes Canal is seemingly easy to commodify since it is not enmeshed – as the water that comes from Huarancante or Mismi is – in an intricate network of reciprocal sociomaterial relations with sentient earth beings. The receipt of Majes Canal water is enabled by paying a water tariff – a seemingly alienated commodity exchange – while receipt of water from Huarancante and Mismi requires both payment of a water tariff and payment through offerings. People and sentient beings enter into long-lasting personal relationships through these offerings while, by contrast, the monetary payment is an abstract transaction. However, people in Yanque also experience their relationship to the state as reciprocal. The water users expect something in return for their participation and their compliance with the formal requirements, in line with Andean ideas of reciprocity. So, although the monetary transaction is short term, the relationship with the state is long term. In addition, Yanqueños enter into personal relations with people who work for and represent the state.

Even if water is a commodity, then, it is still embedded in social relations of mutual dependence, contrary to Marx's (1965 [1867]) characterisation of commodities. If we understand commodities as alienated from relations in a classical sense, water is never fully a commodity in Yanque since it is never fully alienated. There, water is increasingly commodified while also being embedded in relations and the process of commoning. In the Yanque case, then, commodification relies on non-commodification practices and relations (Tsing, 2013); the formal, increasingly commodifying processes of attaining water are not, in themselves, enough to secure sufficient water. Understanding commodities as incorporated into relationships and intertwined with seemingly contradictory practices falls in line with Andean ethnography that describes commodities that resist alienation from social relations and that challenge classical conceptualisations of totally alienated commodities by emphasising that commodities are context-specific (Gose, 1986; Harris, 1989). Thus, if we follow these scholars we can rethink what it means that something is a commodity and can challenge the idea that commodification automatically entails a break with other practices and relations.

Gose (1986) emphasises the connection between capitalist commodification and Andean sacrifice and argues that these practices are not oppositional. Likewise, in Yanque commoning water does not exclude commodification. In other words, payments to Apus and payments to the state and water organisations are complementary practices. One is more personal than the other is, and one is individual and the other collective, but both follow the same logic of receiving something in return. We could ask whether the idea of reciprocity is extended to the state and monetary payments, and whether the logic of capitalist payment is extended to the domain of offerings to non-humans. Following Gose (1986), Harris (1989), and Ødegaard (2010), I argue that monetary payments are not the antithesis of ritual payments. Although the Peruvian state is often conceived as abstract, patchy, and elusive, it is also "frequently invoked as a coherent and singular locus of power" (Pinker and Harvey, 2018: 16). Thus, both the state and Apus are powerful agents who control water and whose relationships must be cared for by Yanqueños.

Furthermore, although land ownership, payments of fees, and completion of irrigation plans are individualised ways to obtain water which point in the direction of increased commercialisation,

communal management and collaborations are also crucial for water access. In addition, water has certain qualities that make it resist complete commodification: it is deeply entangled in relations (which makes it difficult to alienate) and it has abilities to move, connect and transform (see Linton, 2010; Orlove and Caton, 2010; Strang, 2015) that complicate quantification. As such, water has properties or agentic powers of a social and material character that shape human life (Paerregaard, 2018).

The description of water management practices and events from Yanque includes the state version of 'water as a commons', the processes of commoning, and practices that increasingly commodify water. In the community meeting recounted above, water was evoked as a property of the state and thus a common good for everyone living in Peru. Water users in Yanque draw on this notion of water as a common good, which secures them rights to water within the nation state (and, most importantly now, secures them water from the Majes Canal), while also contesting the unequal way that water from that canal is distributed. Thus, faced with the implementation of state laws and policies, they still hold on to local practices of water management (Guillet, 1994). People creatively engage in several kinds of diverse, yet commensurable, activities that exceed "a simple dichotomy between official and indigenous" practices (Hirsch, 2017: 259). Yanqueños ensure that they have papers for their land and they fill in the PCR, pay their water tariff, and work to acquire their individual water licence, thus engaging in practices of quantification and economic valuing of water. At the same time, they contest these practices, and engage in practices that exceed the resource view of water built on a division between themselves and the sentient beings with whom they live. The process of commoning in Yanque – of creating relations, sentience and commonalities – presupposes a continuous entanglement between humans and sentient earth beings, which is different from the commons that the Peruvian government attempts to institutionalise, where water is viewed as a detached resource rather than part of a more-than-human process.

Even though the two forms of commons appear exclusive, my material suggests they are compatible, which resonates with de la Cadena's (2018) notion of 'divergence'.⁸ Although the state and Yanqueños conceive differently of water as a commons, their respective conceptualisations are not radically opposed to each other. In local water management in Yanque, they diverge and contrast but also converge, overlap, and even merge. Moreover, commodification practices also happen alongside the commoning. Yanqueños interchangeably relate to and evoke the state commons, commoning and commodification in water affairs, which can be compared to what Blaser and de la Cadena have named "'uncommons': the negotiated coming together of heterogeneous worlds (and their practices)" (2018: 4).

The term uncommons has mostly been used to describe divergent practices and commons that are not the same but that have an interest in common, for instance, to protect a mountain or an earth being from extractivism (de la Cadena, 2018). Thus, uncommons can be understood as a sort of heterogeneous alliance between indigenous peoples, environmentalists, nongovernmental organisations and the like for a common cause (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2018). However, being a concept that "might offer the possibility to think indigenous and nonindigenous practices on a plane that transforms what was seen as their difference into the shared condition of their constitutive divergence" (de la Cadena, 2018: paragraph 11), I choose to see uncommons as possibly including the state common good, commodification, and commoning in Yanque. Although some of these practices draw on a detachment between humans and nature (enacting water as a resource) and some are founded on a continuum between humans and non-humans (enacting non-humans as active agents or even persons), they converge in Yanque and are not oppositional even though they diverge. Uncommons allows me to think these heterogeneous practices together in the same place, while acknowledging divergences and power imbalances between them.

⁸ Drawing on Stengers (2011), de la Cadena (2018) focuses on 'divergence' rather than difference, a concept that allows for things to be distinct yet *become* together, which means that they are not in opposition but rather relate to one another, perhaps even overlap, while still not being the same. The term thus implies a chance for alliances or connections between things that diverge.

WATER AS MORE THAN COMMONS OR COMMODITY

As the introductory vignette in this article hints, "water is life" (*agua es vida*) and "water is money" (*agua es plata*) in Yanque. Moreover, the empirical material presented in this article has demonstrated that water can even emerge as a being, or several beings, through more-than-human interactions that are significant for local water management. Although water is increasingly seen as a limited commodity, it is not less important for the life of animals, plants and people; not cut from multiple relations; and not disappearing as a being. Commodification relies on, and is intertwined with, practices and relations where water emerges as more than an economic good. Thus, this article argues that water is partly treated as a commodity, is partly a national commons, and at the same time participates in the vernacular processes of commoning.

Moreover, by drawing attention to practices where water is far from a resource or not only a resource, but rather is a life-giving force or a sentient person, the article challenges water governance debates concerned with discussions on 'water as a commons' and 'water as a commodity' that are based on a modern concern with water as a resource. The possible multiplicity of water is concealed in state water policies and the practices it initiates yet is highly relevant for water users in Yanque. I have suggested commoning and uncommons as interesting analytical concepts for exploring ongoing projects of creating a commons. Commoning, as the verb form of commons, points to a commons that is always in the making and can include more-than-human collectives. Conversely, uncommons is a broader term that allows for difference to be the point of departure for a shared condition.

The Yanque case interestingly illustrates how different versions of water and modes of water management come together in the same place through heterogeneous practices that converge and diverge, creating an uncommons. The universally oriented national water management regime invokes water as a national commons together with increased commodification – both of which imply that water is a resource – while the more place-specific orientation of local water management practices encompasses an active, more-than-human collective. However, instead of seeing them as oppositional, perhaps it is more interesting to look at how seemingly paradoxical practices and processes relate and overlap in particular places. Yanque water users include state institutions and state practices in their water management, yet they resist singularisation by holding on to local water management practices and maintaining the relevance of multiple, emerging versions of water. Although these water management practices stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another, and although one builds on a divide between humans and nature while the other emerges from qualitative relations between significant entities and persons such as water beings, Apus, humans, and Pachamama, they are deeply entangled and interchangeably invoked in Yanque.

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