

The Risk of Resource Extraction: An Analysis of Spatial Injustices in the Mining Industries of Ecuador and Canada

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Background

While the majority of mining company headquarters are in **core** countries, the majority of extraction happens in **periphery** countries. **Land-grabbing** is a major player in this issue of this spatial inequality (Liberti 2013). Mining companies often target vulnerable populations for their **cheap labor** and lack of **political power** to oppose land destruction (Voyles 2015). While mining companies often cite **Corporate Social Responsibility** and other programs which aim to encourage development, these can often be ways of covering their tracks of **exploitation** (North et. al 2008). Studies have shown that resource extraction, like mining, creates a system of **underdevelopment**, rather than development, in periphery countries (Gunder-Frank 1991). This raises questions about the gap between the corporate and governmental claims, and the claims made by locals affected by the resource extraction industry.



Indigenous Exploitation in Early Stages of Zaruma Mining (ETSA 1917)

How does resource extraction vary in rhetoric and reality?



Signs at Bira Mine in Zaruma, Ecuador "TO PLAN IS TO AVOID ACCIDENTS," "RETURN HOME SAFE AND SOUND" (Personal Tour 2017)

Canada

- Located in Likely, British Columbia
- Faced an enormous spill in 2014
- Lies adjacent to Secwepemc Nation land
- Headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia by Imperial Metals

Ecuador

- Located in Zaruma, Ecuador
- Has contributed to mercury pollution in nearby rivers
- Serves as competition for local Ecuadorian-owned mines
- Headquartered in Vancouver, BC by CoreGold, Inc

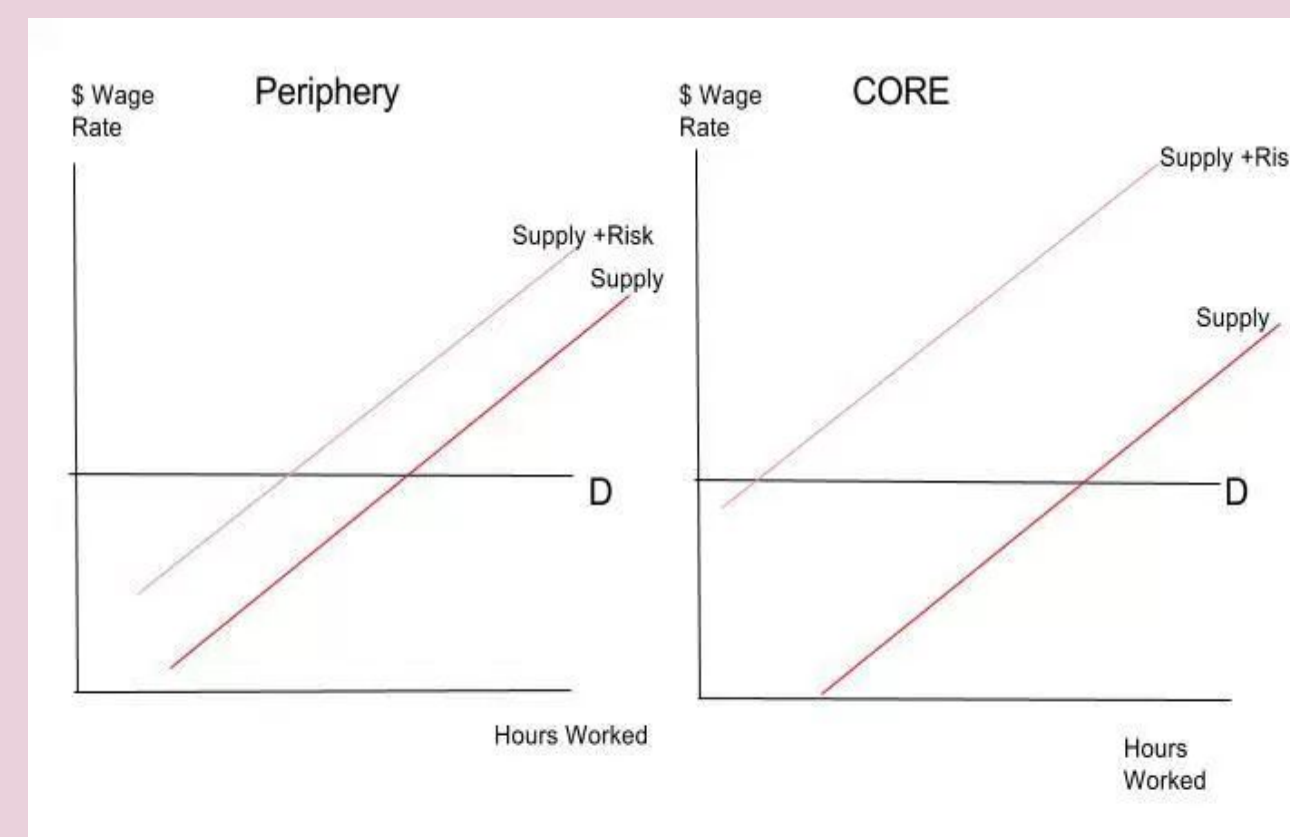
How do labor and land regulations vary in legislation and enforcement between Vancouver-headquartered mines in Likely, BC and Zaruma, Ecuador?



Company Rhetoric	Local Perspectives	Analysis
The Canadian government made a deal with the Williams Lake Band and the Soda Creek Band that they would be entitled to full disclosure on all decisions regarding the operations of the mine there forward , and Imperial Metals would allow them to sit in on meetings and make their voices heard (Schoenfield 2016).	In May 2017, the Women's Warrior Society, along with many other members of the Secwepemc Nation, travelled to the Imperial Metals headquarters in Vancouver, B.C.. The company was holding an investors meeting, and the Women's Warrior Society wanted to express their stories about how the company has affected them, in hopes to encourage other major companies to divest from Imperial Metals. The group was not allowed into the meeting, and was met with violence at the entrance (Murray 2016)	While Imperial Metals reported that the indigenous peoples in Likely would have a voice, the Women's Warrior Society reports that they were denied access to this disclosure and consideration. "Indigenous peoples insist they are not just another stakeholder to be consulted, they are rights holders whose identity, autonomy, and cultural survival are inextricably linked to their relationship with the land" (North et al. 2006: 216). North et al. argue that as the original peoples of a land, indigenous voices deserve priority consideration.
"Mining activities which occur inside the zone of exclusion will be considered illegal mining," (Agencia de Regulación y Control Minera: Translated from Spanish).	"We have the 'zone of exclusion' that spans from over there (points toward west) to all the way out there (points down mountain). So that sounds good in theory, but in practice, this area is still affected by the mines. You see, there's not a lot of protection or security in the area. There is just the local government, which can be corrupt. They take advantage of that. All it takes to process the metals is water and a ball of mercury. The byproduct, with the mercury, they can just throw it in the river and it goes straight to the zone of exclusion. The artisanal mines are worse, though. They are small, they have laws protecting them too"	The government corruption in Zaruma makes the promises for a protected zone where mining cannot occur hard to trust. While Zarumeños feel that the Zone of Exclusion could help protect them from the health risks of mining, the runoff as well as the corruption in the area make the impacts of mining present in all areas, including the zone of exclusion.

Methods

- Spatial Analysis: Google MyMaps Analysis of flows of minerals internationally
- Rhetoric Analysis: Comparisons of statements made by corporations and locals.
- Comparative Economic Analysis: Analysis of Value of a Statistical life lost in core vs. periphery countries and generally externalities from mining.
- Informal Legal Analysis: Word clouds on the Corporate Social Responsibility pages published by major mining companies.



Economic analysis revealed that Canada has economic incentives to mine in areas where populations are vulnerable because labor and risk are cheaper (Cutter et. al 2003).



Spatial Analysis visualizes the inequalities of the resource extraction industry by showing the distribution of extraction (green) and headquarters (pinpoints) of the top ten grossing mining companies in the world (Els 2017).

Conclusions

- The majority of the resources extracted from mining in periphery countries industries are going to core countries.
- Thus, core countries continue to develop through the **exploitation of periphery country land** (Gunder-Frank 1991).
- The resource extraction industry leaves periphery countries in a perpetual state of **underdevelopment**, while disguising itself as an economic aid for the nations which it exploits (Rice 2007).
- The resource extraction industry is complicated by the presence of **multiple, varying truths** experienced by stakeholders.
- Solutions to issues of spatial injustices **must include uprooting systems of oppression** (Voyles 2017).
- We must **challenge nationalist ideas such as NIMBY** in order to create greater equality spatially (Gerrard 1993).
- These conclusions can be applied to other sectors such as energy and agriculture.
- A continuation of this thesis could look further at the ways in which resource extraction impacts **international relations** and climate action. It could look further into **neoliberalism as an evolving force of inequality**.

References

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Secwepemc women slow traffic into the mine, monitoring the disaster on August 19, 2014.



Secwepemc women start the sacred fire on August 18, 2014.