

Review of: "Customary Land Tenure, Mining, and the Development Question: Insights From a Transitional State"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This paper addresses some of the impacts and issues associated with changing land tenure and land use related to mining in a district of Zimbabwe, particularly the rise of foreign mining companies in this area.

Two aims are specified: "How do mining activities relate to land tenure in the countryside?" and "In what ways do mining activities influence rural communities and the development processes?" These are laudable aims, but perhaps the first one is a little too general and open-ended, e.g., the words 'relate' and 'countryside' need further description or delineation. Additionally, more context for the study should be added, particularly where this study is located; for example, it could be mentioned that it uses a district in Zimbabwe as a case study (and why this area makes for an interesting and worthwhile case study). Lastly, a brief overview of the methodological approach could be added at this point in the introduction so the reader is aware of the nature/type of study.

Overall, the writing is not fully developed and explained to the reader. Some specific examples of this are given below, but overall the introduction, in particular, could be improved (see below for specific recommendations). A good edit is needed to improve writing, particularly grammar, punctuation, and clarity of expression.

Methodology is most clearly explained and justified, if a little general in places. Perhaps the lit review search terms could be mentioned. A bit more detail on the interview questions is justified, even if this is in an appendix.

In terms of results/findings, it needs to be clearer in places whether the information is from the interviews or the lit review, e.g., I assume information in quotations is from interviews? The interviews of some 88 people are important, yet there is no collation or summary of their findings or analyses of their responses. Perhaps this is the subject of a subsequent or previous paper, but if so, this needs to be stated. The quotations given could be seen as being selective, so how/why were these selected from all the others?

Some suggestions for improvement in the Introduction are added below (noting that I didn't have time to address all the deficiencies in the other sections):

- The reference to 'steep terrain' is somewhat ambiguous - can it be replaced with a term that encapsulates the development dilemmas faced by many developing countries?
- "Accumulation of the indigenous people" - the meaning here is not clear to me - perhaps needs to be expanded;

- “The role of mining in colonial times was to ensure a steady supply of raw materials for the centre and some local industries” - can you clarify what is meant by ‘centre’ here;
- “Customary tenure has not been static at the same time” - do you mean “Customary tenure has not been static over time”?
- “In colonial times, mining was dependent on reserves for labour (Wolpe 1972). Some of these reserves are present-day communal areas. ” Not clear to me if ‘reserves’ refer to areas or a group of people?
- “.....there is limited community participation and top-down approaches” - this reads like there are limited top-down approaches, which I don't think is the intended meaning;
- In the sentence beginning “The Zimbabwean state has been using political and legal maneuvers to pursue extractivist resource extraction ...” can it be clarified that this mining largely involves formal mining companies. Does it include foreign or multinational mining companies?
- “chikorokoza *chaper*a” - more detail on this operation would be beneficial here, I think.
- “...no skills, lack of skills” - maybe better as “no or poorly developed skills”;
- “.....32 urban councils traditional; leaders’ village heads...” - this sentence is difficult to follow, possibly due to punctuation errors - please make clearer;
- “A functional government system is supposed to spearhead local development...” local development mentioned twice in this sentence - seems to be a writing error?