

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.

General comments

1. Strengths:

- Regarding the background context, you have met the target, and it is fully explainable to readers about Zimbabwe's mining status with the aid of a brief history.
- The study explores the interplay between mining activities and communal land tenure in the Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe (UMP) district, Zimbabwe.
- It focuses on households affected by gold and black granite mining, shedding light on the impact of these mining practices.
- The agroecological diversity of UMP, with its hilly terrains and varied wet and dry areas, adds an intriguing dimension.

2. Best Problem Identifier:

- The central issue lies in understanding the consequences of mining practices on local communities.
- Key problems include:
 - Balancing the interests of large-scale (formal) mining (state-promoted and capitalized) with those of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM).
 - Navigating the evolution of land practices in contrast to static mining and tenure laws, which may have colonial origins.

3. Ethical Care Issue:

- The study involves communal land, which often has cultural and historical significance.
- Ethical considerations include informed consent, privacy, and community well-being.
- Researchers must be mindful of the power dynamics between mining companies and local communities.

In summary, if this research is published, it will not only provide valuable insight into the complex relationship between land tenure, mining, and development in a transitional state but will also provide a way for relevant stakeholders to pay due attention and address the problems facing the community. However, care must be taken to ensure that it does not affect the privacy of individuals, government, and organizations.

Abstract section

Comment 1

1. The abstract becomes entire if the study samples and primary data sources are included.
2. The finest result of the paper may need to sit at the last sentence of the abstract, bring forward to the importance rather than the center.

Introduction section

Comment 2

1. In the context of your **thesis statement**, it is essential to provide a clear explanation of the concept of customary land tenure rules and norms in the study area and to concisely summarize the primary focus of your paper.
2. **Research Gap:** You have cited a lot of studies that were conducted on your country's mining status and land tenure as well. Thus, you need to identify the research gap that makes it different from other studies.
3. **Grammatical:** In your last paragraph from this section, you have written the following sentence: "*Nevertheless, these forms of organization, including the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), it is argued that they are parochial associations that further the ideology of the centre (Moyo, 1993).*" I would like to invite you to replace it with "*Nevertheless, these forms of organization, including the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), are argued to be parochial associations that further the ideology of the centre (Moyo, 1993).*".
4. **Data Source:** In some cases, the study tries to conclude the situation in Zimbabwe based on outdated sources. For instance, *the postcolonial government plays a key role in defining land rights and mining rights as well. In essence, concerning customary land tenure, the state, in alliance with local elites, defines what the custom is and how it should be adhered to (Kojo, 2008). To this day, some of the effects of this system are still noticeable, such as interracial conflicts and long-standing disputes between farmers and miners. For example, the treatment of farmers as trespassers on mining land is still persistent (Muchemwa, 2009).* Here, you have cited studies that were conducted in 2008 and 2009. However, we are now in 2024; thus, there may have been changes in between, and you need to update the sources.

Methodology Section

Comment 3

This study used an appropriate research design that was able to find an effectual input for its journey.

Regarding the sample, you have selected 88 HHs and key informants with the purposive method. What I want to raise here is: How many HHs are there in the district? Do you think that the selected HHs can represent them? What standards did you use to select the sample? Such issues may need a brief explanation, and you are expected to address them.

Finding Section

Comment 4

I'm glad to be a reader of this finding because it is such an interesting and very important study of the problems of society. I would like to thank you for that.

However, I have some minor comments and tried to sit as follows:

1. The sample section reveals that interviews were conducted with key informants from government departments and company representatives. As such, it should incorporate their assumptions regarding the issues.
2. Some sentences need a source to be evidential. Otherwise, they will lose their credibility and become blamed. For example: *'The process of environmental assessments largely involves the village head. In this way, the process is largely exclusionary and can be subjected to abuse by the elites with devastating effects on the community's wide tenure rights'*.
3. As you mentioned in the last paragraph of the findings, political leaders have benefited from the lack of development. What kind of benefits are they receiving from the Chinese company? Such sense-making issues may need to be supported by evidence. If not, it will be prejudiced.