ECOPOLITICS PODCAST EPISODE 3.5: How can we confront the challenges of Canadian Mining?

Additional Pedagogical Resources

Summary: Mining is an essential component to our everyday lives, providing us with the raw materials we need to create a wide variety of products. However, while mining contributes to our technological progress, it comes with an often hidden dark side rife with environmental and human rights abuses. When more than 60% of the world’s mining companies are based in Canada, what does this mean for us as everyday ecocitizens? What responsibilities do we have with respect to holding these companies to account for their use and abuse of people and planet? These are some of the questions we drill into today with guests Chandu Claver, International Spokesperson for the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance, Teresa Kramarz, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, and Sheri Meyerhoffer, Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE).

Key Takeaways

- Minerals extraction can have direct and indirect consequences for the environment and human rights. Often, however, these impacts are out of sight from those who consume materials extracted in remote or far away places.
- A majority of the world’s mining companies are headquartered in Canada, and we know there are significant consequences of Canadian mining operations in communities globally.
- Mining is connected to the global economy through various industries, including the financial sector. As a result, individual Canadians may be invested in mining through their pension funds, investments, or participation in various banking activities, without even knowing it.
- People living in communities adjacent to mining projects sometimes join forces to resist mining projects or mitigate their negative effects. However, in many countries, there is limited decision-making or regulatory space that includes the voices of communities who experience harm in a meaningful way. To address the gaps in global accountability and corporate responsibility, some governments have crafted new legislation to better regulate resource extraction.
- There are significant steps that could be taken to address human rights violations and extraction by Canadian mining corporations abroad. For example, the introduction of legislation that creates clear regulations and boundaries around resource extraction practices in developing countries, and creating the governance tools that recognize the rights of affected communities to seek justice.
- Canada’s Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) is a new human rights institution designed to investigate complaints made against companies working in mining, oil and gas, and the garment industry, based in Canada.

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Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the relationship between global finance, mining interests operating globally, and the environmental harms experienced in some communities?

2. What do you see as the role for eco-citizens in addressing the challenges of Canadian mining?

3. What do you think of the new office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE)? To what extent do you think it will make a difference?

Learn more about our Guests

Chandu Claver
- Learn more about Cordillera People’s Alliance https://www.cpaphils.org/

Read more about Chandu Claver’s work in the news

Dr. Teresa Kramarz
- Learn more about Teresa’s work at the Munk School of Global Affairs https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/profile/kramarz-teresa/
- Explore Teresa’s work at http://www.teresakramarz.com/

Select articles, books, and videos:
Sheri Meyerhoffer

- Learn more about the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise
- Read the April 2019 Order in Council establishing the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise
- Read the September 2019 Order in Council that amends the mandate of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise

Explore resources mentioned in this episode:

- Learn more about the Canadian Pension Plan https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp.html
- Learn more about Ivanhoe Mines https://www.ivanhoemines.com/
- Learn more about the Provinces of Philippines https://www.discoverthephilippines.com/category/provinces
- Learn more about the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan https://www.otpp.com/en-ca/
- Learn more about France’s mining regulations https://www.mineralinfo.fr/en
- Learn more about Netherland’s mining regulations https://www.nlog.nl/en/legislation
- Learn more about the United Nations https://www.un.org/
- Learn more about Export Development Canada (EDC) https://www.edc.ca/
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- Learn more about Canadian NGOs active on mining issues: https://miningwatch.ca/ and https://rightsaction.org/

Learn more about Canadian Mining Projects and Resource Extraction Globally:

Learn more about Corporate Social Responsibility, Policy, and Legislation: