

Environmental Impact Assessments in Peru: Tools for Violence

Authors : Nadia Degregori

Abstract : This paper focuses on Peru's Environmental Impact Assessment's communication and participation mechanisms, whose rationale is to prevent conflictive situations by -supposedly- providing high-quality information about mining projects and their impacts to affected stakeholders. It is argued that, in fact, these mechanisms enhance citizens' feelings of fear and/or mistrust towards mining projects and the companies behind them because their design follows a top-down perspective that limits "participation" to a passive reception of information, and which does not address power unbalances between communities and companies or government. As well, the paper contends that this way of managing the social aspects of Environmental Impact Assessments in Peru leads stakeholders who possess less power (typically communities) to incline towards maintaining the status quo and avoiding negotiations with either the central government or mining companies as a defence mechanism for avoiding a bad negotiation.

Keywords : community relations, environmental impact assessments, governance and participation, mining, Peru

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