

IM4DC

Action Research Report

SUMMARY

Researcher:

Gerardo Castillo – PhD Candidate

School/Centre:

Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining

University/ Institutions:

The University of Queensland

Key themes:

Community and Environmental Sustainability

Key countries:

Peru

Completion:

March 2014

Research aims:

This research investigated social transformations in rural societies triggered by resource development in Peru.

- Families, leaders, social scientists and mine employees were interviewed extensively
- Other data was obtained from public sources
- A novel approach taken from geographical theories of “production of space” was used in analysing the data

For further information on this action research:

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Powerpoint presentation: “Transforming Andean Space: Local experiences and Mining Development in Peru” - PhD mid-candidature presentation

Mid-candidature report available on request from:
admin@im4dc.org

Transforming Andean Space: Local Experiences and Mining Development in Peru

This research was part of an ongoing PhD project to build an understanding of the transformations experienced by rural societies in the context of mining development in the Peruvian Andes, using a novel approach taken from geographical theories of “production of space”. The research analysed four spatial dimensions: i) access to space; ii) production in the space; iii) spatial mobility and; iv) spatial representations. In turn, the research investigated what these spatial changes tell us about larger social transformations in the region in terms of urbanisation, market integration, migration, and representations of the city and the countryside. In brief, through the conceptual lenses of “production of space” the research describes and analyses local practices and experiences in the context of mining development. Further, it compares these experiences with accounts of social change with the purpose of establishing a debate about the particularities of social transformations in rural societies, which have been triggered by resource development.

The research followed the experiences of fourteen families over the past twenty years in the vicinity of La Granja copper project, in Cajamarca, northern Peru. It considered different voices and perspectives (male family heads and their partners with different spatial experiences, local leaders and qualified informants, company employees and social scientists) and made use of different sources and techniques (in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, socio-economic secondary data and local fiction).

Analysis of the social transformations found four features:

- The resulting urbanisation process is not a binary or one-way change from rural to urban lives, but a mixed and fluid one, where families use their networks in order to bridge both spaces
- Market integration is reached more through the increase in waged labour and consumption of external goods (e.g. rice or mobile phones) than through farming productivity gains
- Social relationships have not necessarily become more individualistic and anonymous, and kinship and social networks (e.g. region/locality bonds or membership of community-protection organisations) remain central for individual's lives; however, some social relationships and identities are increasingly challenged, especially gender ones
- Constructions of social representations of the city and the country-side are strongly shaped by lines of gender and age, as well as collective and individual experiences

This view implies that the larger outcomes could be understood as a social transformation process, where kinship and local networks act as a distribution system and safety net. In other words, a good part of the distribution of goods and services and many of the decisions dealing with mining development at a local level are regulated by extended kinship networks and not exclusively by State institutions or company policies.