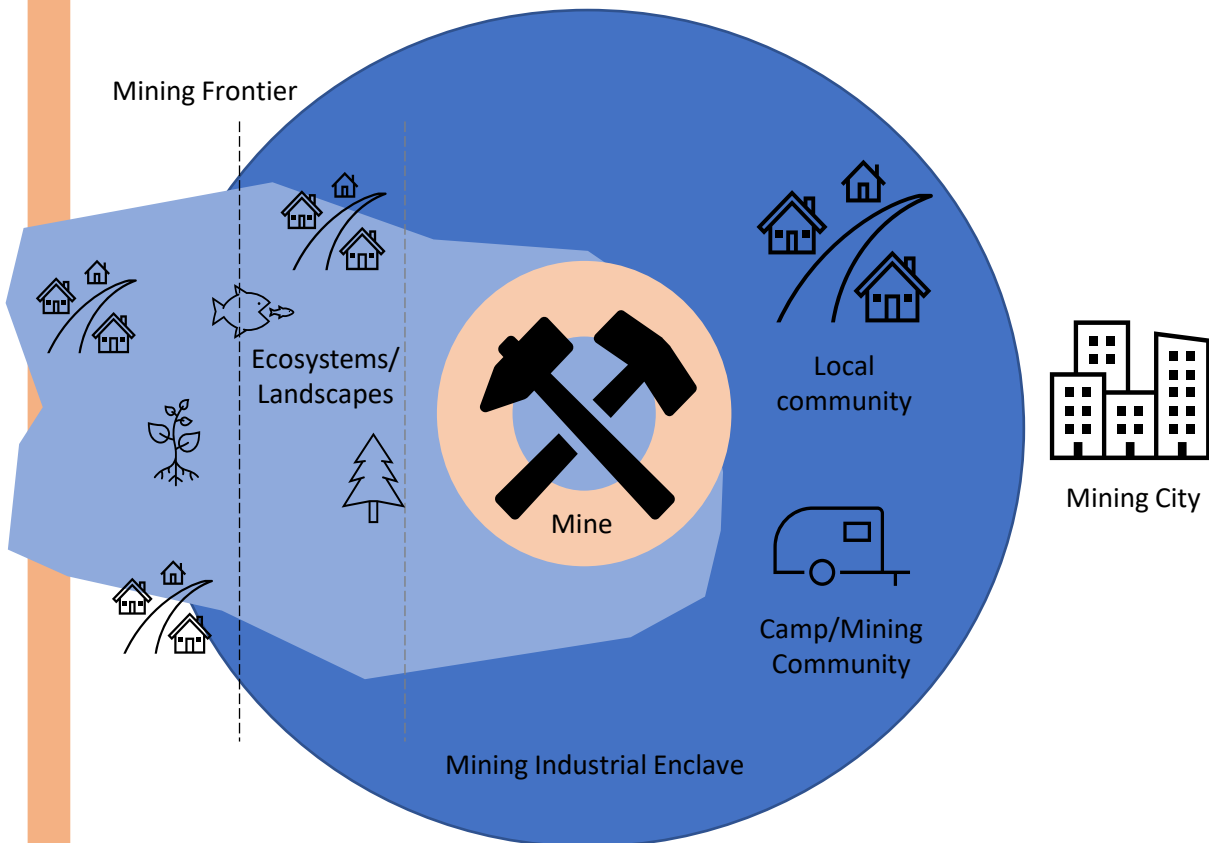


Building Fences: Decoding the Socio-Spatial Impacts of Mining in Rural Canadian Resource Communities

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Research Questions

- 1) Where do fences exist in mining communities (i.e. public/private property, natural/built spaces), why do they exist (what is their intended purpose), and what do they look like (material, form, size)?
- 2) How do fences function in the socio-cultural context of mining communities and what populations/demographics are impacted by fences/fence-building? How are fences perceived? Do they create or restrict access to spaces of value and for whom? How is land managed and what people/materials flow through fences? Have populations found ways to navigate/respond to fences/fence-building?
- 3) What opportunities and/or challenges do fences present for social-cultural sustainability?

Methods

- Survey of municipal planners (181 Canadian resource communities with 20% base sector employment in mining)
- Comparative case study of three mining communities selected through planning survey
 - Participant observation & GIS fence mapping
 - Photovoice & stakeholder interviews
 - Collaborative artwork with each community

Significance

Fences have been studied in the context of environmental sustainability, including ecosystem fragmentation; however, academics and artists are increasingly recognizing the role of built structures, like fences and roads, in representing historic and enduring socio-cultural relationships. This study will build on previous interdisciplinary work through application of a transdisciplinary approach. By collaborating with municipalities and Indigenous groups, findings can empower communities to consider socio-cultural sustainability through built space in planning, policy, and practice.

Do fences act as barriers to socio-cultural sustainability in mining communities?

Studies have documented the impacts of large-scale mining projects for local communities, mining camps, mining cities, landscapes, mining frontiers and mining industrial enclaves. However, few studies explore how mines change landscapes beyond the mine itself and, by extension, impact socio-cultural contexts.

Mining Space is “a social space where mining industry production relations, socio-environmental impacts and corporate social responsibility programs imbue certain specific characteristics upon social practices and representations of space” (Devenin & Bianchi 2019, p.15). Spatial practices in mining space may include segregation in space between people who belong to the mining economy and those who do not and the prioritizing of mining activities over others, like agriculture and tourism.



Fences are physical and symbolic markers of social difference and can be built to keep the 'other' out or in, to keep factions apart, or to create or reinforce cohesion or identity for a group of individuals (Rosen & Grant 2011). In resource communities, fences may delineate between company and community space and allow or restrict access to natural resource deposits or natural features for certain groups.

This project will consider the role fences play in actualizing/visualizing socio-spatial divisions for mining communities and their broader mining spaces.

