

Leanna Butters, TRSU – abstract

Building Fences: Decoding the socio-spatial impacts of mining in rural Canadian resource communities

Increased global demand for commodities such as iron, ore, natural gas, and oil, as well as subsequent increases in resource activities, have shed light on the often problematic relationships between resource extraction projects and communities, especially resource-dependent communities. An emerging area of interest in this context is socio-spatial perspectives of mining. While mining projects have been examined with respect to their scale, impacts on identity, and economic geography dynamics, little is known about how mining operations transform space beyond the mine itself and, by extension, impact socio-cultural contexts. Mines change the landscapes where they are situated and, in doing so, participate in producing or building space. It has been argued that built space can give structure to the social aspects of life, maintain social networks, and contribute to understandings of roles, identities, and social status. Fences, for instance, are both physical and symbolic markers of social difference. They 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. In the context of resource communities, fences may also delineate between company and community space and allow/restrict access to natural resource deposits and/or other natural features for certain groups. Working collaboratively with three Canadian mining-dependent communities, this project will study fences as mechanisms of socio-spatial production in mining. Findings will contribute to emerging research on the socio-spatial impacts of mining and have the potential to support communities in considering socio-spatial landscapes in planning, policy, and practice.