

“THE TURKISH DELIGHT”: THE POLITICS OF SCALING UP MINING INVESTMENTS

Taking into account all legal changes in the mining sector together with the environmental regulations since 1980s, one can say Turkey’s attitude towards the transnational mining business has been favorable. The necessity to abide by the international environmental regulations, particularly the EU acquis has stimulated the introduction of environmental concerns into economic enterprises, including the mining sector. Collaboration between the state and mining lobby in raising aspirations for scaling up mining investments with global economy has profound impacts in ultimate legal restructuring of the mining sector, but it at the same time impairs accountability of government policies as the voices of local communities are marginalized in decision making process. By calling for the inclusion of concerns of local community perspectives in discussing new mining investments, this article argues that the state should move beyond the corporate perspective and take into consideration a multi-stakeholder approach.

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The Turkish delight metaphor is a good start point for inquiring into aspirations for scaling up new mining investments with the global economy in Turkey. As Steven Poulton of Ariana Resources, a UK based minerals exploration company, puts, Turkey emerges as an internationally competitive country with lower tax rates and potentially rich mineral resources (especially in gold and silver) in a way that demarcates the reception of Turkey as the new Turkish delight for international investors.¹ Yet one cannot detach the story of scaling up the mining sector with the global economy from its impacts on environment and local communities. Concurrently with international developments, proliferation of this double transformation in the mining sector, namely the process of neo-liberalization and greening, has defined the politics of opening up new transnational mining investments in Turkey. In other words, the process of becoming a “Turkish delight” for global investors has to be understood not only in terms of finance, tax rates, or anything related with profitability, but also in its social and environmental impacts. As mutually reinforcing areas of contestation, discussing new mining investments in Turkey spans environmental, social and economic arguments in the background of transnationalization of the mining sector.

Presenting Turkey as an attractive country for transnational mining investments has also found resonance at the state level together with the restructuring of the mining laws, thus easing the transition to a truly globalized economy. Scaling up mining investments with the global economy has been on the Turkey’s agenda since the mid-1980s. Despite the willingness on part of the Turkish government starting with mid 1980s, a majority of mining explorations were carried out throughout the 1990s. Within ten years time, 47 transnational mining corporations received gold mine permits in Turkey.² Unsatisfied with the slow progress of mining investments, in 2006, Hilmi Güler, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources at the time, expressed his concerns about missing the opportunity of making use of Turkey’s potential mineral reserves due to the wrong evaluation of public opinion, misleading environmentalist pressures and cumbersome bureaucracy that stand on the way of Turkey realizing the great economic value of its resources.³ As he said in the opening ceremony of Uşak Kışladağ gold mine, “We do not want to be the poor wardens of rich underground resources,”⁴

¹ Steven Poulton, “Turkish Delight,” *Materials World: The Journal of The Institute of Materials*, Vol.14 No. 2 (2006), p.24.

² “‘Gold’ is discussed on the table in Ministry of Energy/ Güler: ‘We cannot utilize from our reserves enough’”, *Dünya*, 15 July 2006.

³ *Dünya*, 17 July 2006

⁴ “Uşak Kışladağı gold mine is opened for operation.”, *İhlas News Agency*, 11 July 2006.

meaning that newer reserves should be fully processed to bring economic prosperity in line with the scaling up of the mining sector. It is possible to infer from Güler's statement that Turkey does participate in the idea that mining sector should be truly globalized, which is in a way reflected in government's willingness to open up mineral resources to foreign investment and restructure its legal framework accordingly.

Nevertheless, the impediments to the new national project of going global, which promises to bring economic prosperity and develop Turkey further, constitute the corpus of discursive practices in contesting the global imagination. As the first transnational gold mining investment that was initially established by Eurogold (then transferred to Newmont, and Koza Gold Mining subsequently), the Bergama Ovacık gold mine is a milestone in the history of mining in Turkey in various respects. First of all, it signifies the transnationalization of the mining economy in Turkey and the national dreams of catching up with the global economy. On the other hand, Bergama has been a notorious site for escalation of community based movement contesting the new mining investment on the grounds of human rights violations, environmental degradation, resettlement, and so forth. Within a decade, Bergama gold mining dispute has changed the perception of new mining investments in terms of environmental, economic and social consequences.

As of today, we can observe that mining explorations are carried out in different parts of Turkey (from the Black Sea to the Aegean region) that in a way points out the globalist aspirations for bringing transnational mining investments to the country. However, the politics of discussing new mining investments has also been transformed with the inclusion of a mining lobby, the state, local communities and civil society into the debate. This article reviews both neo-liberalization and greening of the mining sector in Turkey in a way as to capture this double transformation by looking at the legal restructuring and discursive practices of the state and the mining corporations operating in Turkey.

Push and Pull Factors Affecting the Mining Sector in Turkey

In order to understand what new mining projects mean for Turkey, we need to trace the cultural, historical and political genealogy of mining until the early periods of modern Turkey. With the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, catching up with the West and the idea of progress had a profound impact in the

mining industry as well. Articulation of a developmentalist discourse in the mining sector has been present since 1923 with an emphasis on the need to explore Turkey's "underutilized" rich natural resources on the way to progress. Given the rudimentary levels of infrastructure and basic development in eastern and central areas, the state's involvement with industrial enterprises began with mineral resources and manufacturing.⁵ During the depression era from 1930 to 1939, Turkey's response was to promote etatist policies relying on centrally planned industrial policies and development initiatives.⁶ In response to the lack of private investment in major industrial sectors, State Economic Enterprises (SEEs) were established in two major sectors, namely manufacturing and mining. Following etatist policies in the mineral sector, Petroleum and Gold Prospecting and Operation Agencies, General Directorate of Mineral Research and Exploration (MTA) and ETİBANK were established in 1933 and 1935 respectively for funding the mining sector by the state.⁷ Reaching its peak in the Import Substitution Industrialization era of 1960s and 1970s, the state has been a defining actor in the "rational" utilization of mineral resources in support of other industrial enterprises.

After the military takeover in 1980, privatization of the mining industry was initiated with Turkey's new neo-liberal outlook, favoring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The economic liberalization program of Turgut Özal's government opened the way to dismantle the etatist tradition in major industries including the mining sector. The transition was quite smooth due to suppression of any possible objection from unions or any other opposition political parties by the military regime. Changes in the legal framework have been in line with the new economic policy of transferring permission of mining activity from its state monopoly to the private sector. Starting from the 1980s, especially under Özal (1983-1987 and 1987-1989), liberalization process in the mining sector was promoted extensively. In 1985, Mining Law No. 3213 was designed to expand mining activities both to national and foreign entrepreneurs with limited permission for the private sector. Yet, most of these limitations were lifted gradually during the 1990s.⁸ One of the crucial decisions was equalization of standards for MTA and private mining business, as the former should also apply for exploration of

⁵ Brian W. Beeley, "On the geography of development in Turkey" in Eric Watkons (Ed), *The Middle Eastern Environment* (Cambridge: John Adamson Publishing Consultants, 1995), p. 120.

⁶ Duygu Avcı, "Political Economy of Environment in Turkey: Gold Mining Conflict in Ida Mountains", *Boğaziçi University, MA Thesis*, 2008, p. 44.

⁷ Murat Arsel, "Bergama Imbroglıo" in Adaman, Fikret, and Murat Arsel (eds), *Environmentalism in Turkey: Between Democracy and Development?* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Studies in Environmental Policy and Practice, 2005), p. 269.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

mineral and metals on equal terms with the latter. A big step was taken with the Amendment on Mining Law No. 3213 in 1994 when the decision to privatize all state owned mining sites was passed and favorable business conditions for foreign private investors were put into play.

Similar to privatization of other public enterprises provisioned under World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment program, the reason behind privatization of the mining sector was attributed to the inefficiency of public institutions. The rapid processes of privatization also affected the biggest public enterprise, ETİBANK, which had had a profit of 170-180 million dollars in the beginning of 1980s. The share of state investment in the mining sector fell from 8,17 percent in 1985 to 0,99 percent in 1999.⁹ By 2001, an outstanding number of private enterprises had joined the mining sector; there were 1191 private companies, and 576 public ones.¹⁰ Mining Law No. 5177 of 2004 was even more comprehensive – extending exploration permissions for gold in forests, protected conservation sites, national parks, agricultural fields and touristic areas. All these changes together were indicative of the liberalization and privatization program that opened the way for merging the mining sector in Turkey with the global mining business and expanding mining activities in its scope and geography.¹¹

On the other hand, legal restructuring of property rights with regards to minerals and land issues as a part of the FDI led development program for the mining sector, is clearly redefining the process of ownership of natural resources and to whom mineral rights can be granted by the state.¹² According to current articles regulating mining activity, “the ownership of minerals” is under the control of the state and cannot be impeded by ownership rights of a land owner. It is the state that owns mineral resources and gives permission rights for private companies to operate in the region if they have statutory provisions for mining and conform to mining laws of Turkey.¹³ Even though the state has ceased to engage in mining activities, restructuring of the legal framework in accordance with the World Bank framework has created a new property regime enabling smooth entry for foreign investments. The global conjuncture to scale up mining investments by creating a favorable business climate in favor of multinational mining

⁹ Tahir Öngür, “Globalization and Mining Laws”, speech given on 10 January 2003, ITU Mining Engineering Department, Istanbul.

¹⁰ Avcı (2008), p. 44.

¹¹ Arsel (2005), p. 265.

¹² Ali Arol “Current Status of FDI and Environmental Issues in Mining in Turkey” presented in Global Forum on International Investment, OECD Conference on Foreign Direct Investment and the Environment, 2002, p.5.

¹³ Ibid.

corporations at the state level has been acknowledged by the CEO of a mining company in a journal as the following: “Turkey is one of the most liberal countries when it comes to Mining Law”.¹⁴ In other words, the liberalization process has opened the way for the realization of the ‘Turkish delight’ for transnational mining investments by eliminating impediments to mining operations through restructuring the legal system.

Reconsidering the “Environment”

“Environment is our mother, mining is our father!”
Süleyman Demirel

According to Süleyman Demirel, the former prime minister and president of Turkey: he has two parents (miners and environmentalists) both standing on his shoulders to ask whom he loves more. In response, he says that he wears two badges (one belonging to the mining association and the other to environmentalists) indicating that he has affection to both of them, but never says it when they are both present. As the new national project of scaling up mining investments is expressed through old paternalist politics of Süleyman Demirel, Hilmi Güler was also careful to express the government’s position on gold mining investments when he repeated this story in response to critiques raised by environmentalists and the mining lobby. One can notice that reconsideration of environment and mining in the same story signifies a transformation in government’s attitude towards new mining projects. Most importantly, this story quoted above suggests that the need for reconsideration of the environment and the globalist imagination of scaling up economy are two significant components of state’s discursive practices in the discussions related to opening up of new mining investments.

Over the last two decades, Turkey has had significant institutional restructuring in major industrial areas, incorporating environmental concerns to its government bodies and regulations. One can notice that the story of greening at the state level in Turkey is a relatively recent phenomenon. For instance, the first two successive Five-Year Development Plans of the period of 1963-1973 did not mention any word with regards to environment. Whereas, the third Five-Year Development Plan for the first time identified the scope of environmental problems as deficiencies in organization and technology, education and income distribution, yet stated that this could not be used as a justification for deceleration

¹⁴ Avci (2008), p. 72.

of development efforts.¹⁵ Adding to this fact, negotiations for accession to the European Union (EU) remarkably accelerated the need to comply with the EU acquis. As declared by the Special Ad Hoc Committee Report on Environment, environmental concerns would constitute an important basis for international relations in general but more importantly for EU-Turkey relations.¹⁶ A World Bank study on Turkey states that the investment costs for putting the EU acquis into practice will be between 28 to 49 billion euros, which will constitute one to 1.25 percent of GDP within 17 to 19 years time, together with investments from the state, municipalities, state enterprises and the private sector.¹⁷

Restructuring of regulations in the mining sector is related to bringing environmental regulations in accordance with international standards. Starting with the 1980s, one can observe that legal structuring of the mining sector goes in the direction of attaining a greener image by acknowledging that development objectives can have impacts on environment. Therefore it has brought the understanding at the state level that mining operations should also be regulated. This remarkable shift in environmental regulation in a way reflects a new epoch on a global scale that recognizes environmental impacts of industrial production promoted by an uninterrupted economic growth regime.

A closer look into the environmental regulations regarding the mining sector in Turkey can be tracked as the following: a) during the 1980s, Environmental Law 2872 passed and for the first time mentioned the “polluter pays principle”; b) in 1993, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation was enacted for companies whose activities are inducing significant environmental impact; c) in 2002, amendments on the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation were made to require companies to design unique EIAs for each project in line with EU regulations; d) with the introduction of the Mining Law 5177 in 2004, EIAs were abolished again.¹⁸ Regulation of the mining sector with regard to environmental concerns is noteworthy, as one can recognize the increasing role of the private sector in environmental decision-making – reducing the impact of the regulatory framework for mining companies in favor of voluntary schemes put into practice by mining businesses. For instance, initial reduction of EIAs processes from

¹⁵ E. Özveren, E Özçelik and S. E. Naş, “Environmental Policy in Turkey: An Institutional Critique presented at AHE 10th Annual Conference, 6 July 2008, Cambridge, p. 9.

¹⁶ Özveren et al, 2008, p. 9.

¹⁷ Anil Markandya, “Turkey on the Path to EU Accession: The Environmental Acquis” in Togan, Sübidey and Hoekman, Bernard M. (eds), *Turkey Economic Reform and Accession to the European Union* (Washington, DC: Copublication of World Bank and the Center for Economic Policy Research, 2005), p. 309.

¹⁸ Arol, 2002, p. 12.

117 days to 35 days in 2003 increased authority given to foreign companies to conduct EIA studies. Similarly, the elimination of EIAs in the mining exploration period indicates strong presence of lobbying activities of mining sector in Turkey.

Even though the accession process to the European Union has brought some leverage on Turkey to comply with environmental regulations and consideration of various stakeholders in discussing mining operations, it has had little impact on government's attitude towards the mining sector. In 2008, the EU Commission on Environment asked the Turkish government to inform them about environmental impacts of Bergama gold mine upon a formal motion by the European Parliament member Dimitris Papadimoulis. In response, Turkish government took full responsibility of investigating the new EIA law and its possible impacts on environment and local communities. Despite the need to respond to environmental concerns raised by international institutions, be it the World Bank, IMF or the EU, the Turkish government continued to lift environmental regulations by eliminating EIA requirements in the mining exploration period, which opened the way for accelerating mining explorations without any bureaucratic impediment. Nevertheless, this picture has changed recently, given strong criticism raised by civic groups and due to international pressure. By July 2009, a new decree has been passed in the Parliament to bring the EIAs back in mining exploration period, yet it is too early to talk about the impact of this change. Although the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has warned mining companies to abide by the new environmental regulations, we need to see how these new regulations will be put into practice in the near future.

“Correcting the Image”: Inside the Mining Lobby in Turkey

Every civilization or society will have their own “problems”. Countries like ours, which pass the underdeveloped line and are on the way to developed welfare society, have even bigger problems. As it can be understood from its name, “the developing country” struggles with all the problems. In this struggle, if there is not any “mining sector”, then it signifies a serious problem.¹⁹

This quotation above was taken from the declaration of the mining business lobby, publicized after a regional meeting in the Aegean Region Chamber of

¹⁹ Rüştü Bozkurt, “Call from Miners”, *Dünya*, 18 September 2007.

Industry, which in September 2007 brought together mining companies operating in Turkey to discuss their problems. The meeting ended with the conclusion that the biggest obstacle to mining operations in Turkey is the bad publicity of mining, therefore the sector should first refresh its image, and then start talking about the specific problems of their sector. This conclusion suggests that the image of mining in the eye of public is the most important factor underlying the practices of mining corporations. To the extent that the mining sector articulates the promise of catching up with the global economy, one can see that their fragility or ability to successfully operate depends on getting consent from the local communities, where mining operations take place.

In the same meeting, Muharrem Köse, the general coordinator of Association for Gold Miners (AGM - an umbrella organization of the mining lobby in Turkey) gives a small speech in the meeting about how the mining sector is vulnerable to risks associated with credit taking and bureaucratic impediments with regard to permission contracts given by the government.²⁰ Accordingly, the total gold reserve potential of Turkey is estimated around 6,500 tons, but it is not known exactly where these reserves are located; therefore mining businesses need a significant amount of risk finance for exploring the gold reserves and turn them into profit.²¹ However, the bad publicity of the sector worsens the process of taking credit for investments from national banks. On the other hand, escalation in the number of exploration permission contracts (around 36,000) does not correspond with the real amount of investments for exploring mine reserves. According to estimates of AGM, one-fifth of the current exploration activities are carried out by MTA, whereas the rest is done by foreign investment. As said by Mustafa Telli, a member of head committee of the Kütahya Chamber of Industry, the new mining law does not facilitate a smoother operation of foreign mining companies in Turkey; on the contrary, it initiates a new market for buying and selling permission contracts without any real investment for gold reserves.²²

These pull and push factors indicate that mining investments have been vulnerable to bad publicity, which hinders the spread of promotion of newer mining explorations given the lack of credit for small firms. Mapping gold reserves, acquiring exploration rights, developing banking system for credits are all parts of the politics of new mining investments. That is why the rush for exploration permits, which is conceived as an indicator of the government's support for

²⁰ "Call from Miners", *Dünya*, 18 September 2007.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

developing the mining sector, was criticized by the mining lobby on the ground that it cannot accelerate the process of finding new gold ores. As new low grade gold ores necessitate a substantial amount of exploration and the need for finding credits for exploration investments has been entangled with global aspirations of scaling up the investment further, one can see that justification for the entry of big multinational mining companies can be validated by their technical expertise and ability to invest large sums of capital. As stated by Muharrem Köse, investment in the mining sector is in fact an “investment for hope”; it requires a risk capital that can only be acquired by large foreign mining companies.²³ In this statement, one can observe the argument that large mining companies are more efficient in exploring, mapping and knowing gold ores, and then turning them into a profit. Accordingly, the rational utilization of underground resources could only be achieved through acceleration of exploration activities, such as searching and drilling in a wider area and knowing the mine site better beforehand; otherwise, as said by Köse, inefficient small investments result in disbelief in new mining investment and deter entrepreneurs who are willing to invest in the business.²⁴

As much as new mining investments depend on finding capital, expending exploration sites, and smooth performance in the legal structure of the host country, their ability to successfully operate in a local region depends on governing the discursive space that requires articulating global discourses in the national and local contexts. That is why the far most urgent priority of the mining lobby was stated as “correcting the image of sector” in the 2007 meeting. A year after this meeting, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources declared that the state should also be involved in every stage of mining operations and establish trust in local populations by enlightening them about prospects of mining.²⁵

Neo-liberalization of the sector in Turkey has had a profound impact on the restructuring of the mining law that opened the way for privatization and scaling up investments by allowing the operation of foreign mining companies in Turkey. The idea of developing Turkey’s gold reserves and making it one of the chief gold producers in Europe has been promoted both by the state and also by mining companies. The globalist aspirations for scaling mining investments up with global economy, where Turkey stands as second in personal gold investments after India has significant resonance in the national politics through

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Avcı (2008), p. 74

declarations that Turkey will be less dependent on gold imports to sustain its need for personal gold investments.

A closer attention to the Call from Miners announced at the end of the 2007 meeting of the mining lobby in Turkey shows that the globalist aspirations for scaling up mining investments with global economy are entangled with the dreams of catching up with “developed” countries, and prosperity of the nation. As it is written in the Call, “If one country cannot use its own resources effectively and turn to wealth, then it cannot produce other new resources for development and progress on the way to welfare societies. Efficient production of known mineral resources is one of the main components of development efforts.”²⁶ The same text also presents the mining sector as one of the promising sectors to push Turkey to the frontiers of growth and development by its economic principles of prediction and precaution. According to these principles, one needs to decide to invest in minerals at the right time by closely following supply and demand dynamics for minerals on the world market so as to make a profitable investment.²⁷ As a model of rapid economic growth in the last decade, China presents a good example of utilizing a country’s mineral base to scale up investments with global economy by deciding and acting at the right time, when the market for minerals is at its peak.²⁸ Therefore, the Call from Miners develops the idea that progress to a welfare society resides on first knowing Turkey’s mineral base better (meaning that more exploration activities should be carried out), and then making use of the world market at the right time so as to acquire quick profits like the big miracle China has achieved. However, the Call from Miners also implies that the only efficient way that will bring this big economic push to Turkey is to open the way for scaling up mining investments, which can only be carried out by attracting big foreign mining companies to Turkey, due to their capacity to invest large sums of capital.

Not only does capturing the national and local aspirations with the promise of growth and catching up with welfare societies constitute the biggest part of discursive practices adopted by the mining sector, but also the need for social license to operate in the local contexts is a crucial factor in remaking the image of the mining sector in Turkey. As it is mentioned in the Call from Miners, there is a serious consideration of social and economic development of localities, where mining companies have attained the role of the state in providing

²⁶ Bozkurt, 18 September 2007.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

development provisions. One of the common phrases used by mining lobby in Turkey now is “sustainable mining”. This phrase implies a win-win solution to the social and environmental problems associated with mining operations. For instance, the emphasis on local development provisions, which are provided by mining companies as a solution to social problems of rural areas in Turkey, is a crucial move in taming critiques raised against mining investments in Bergama and Uşak Kışladağ gold mines.

A closer look into the discursive practices employed by the pro-mining lobby indicates their participation in sustainability discourse. As said by Hayri Öğüt, general directorate of Koza Gold Mining in Bergama, technological performance in the Ovacık gold mine is the most advanced in terms of environmental requirements, and it is way ahead of countries like France, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and the U.S. where environmental standards are considered to be the highest.²⁹ In a speech, Öğüt emphasizes the successful incorporation of a sustainable mining concept into the Bergama gold mining project, and points out how Bergama is even shown as an example by the European Commission to other countries on environmental regulations.³⁰ Here the employment of sustainability as eco-modernization of mining facilities, and subsequent confirmation of the advanced state of technology by reports of Ministries according to the appropriate “scientific criteria” have all been underlined in the discursive practices employed in the Bergama gold mine dispute.

Shortly, environmental authority and social expertise, which have been reconciled with the economic benefits of mining investments, constitute the corpus of arguments of the pro-mining lobby in Turkey. Eco-modernization of mining facilities and corporate social responsibility projects are two main pillars of the sustainable mining practices promoted by mining lobby. However, we need to carefully examine what will be the consequences of such a new environmental governance regime on the local communities for the near future.

The Need for Reconsidering Local Community Perspectives

Under the new environmental governance regime, one can see the proliferation of globalist aspirations for attracting transnational mining companies to Turkey, which has loosened environmental regulations in favor of an attractive business

²⁹ Fahri Sarrafoğlu, “State Earned 60 Million from Koza Gold”, *Yeni Şafak*, 6 July 2008.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

climate. In the first place, reduction of days necessary to get an EIA report, and subsequently the weakening of compulsory regulation of the mining sector with the elimination of EIAs in the exploration period, suggests that demands of the mining lobby are well represented at the state level. This has not only led to deficient reporting of socio-economic and environmental impacts of mining investments, but also has impaired the accountability of the state to its citizens, who demand objective assessment of new mining projects in Turkey.

In analyzing the environmental policies targeting the mining sector, we need to bear in mind the following questions: How are these EIAs conducted? What are the crucial mechanisms in giving permission to a mining company conducted EIA in Ankara? What might be the consequence of passing to voluntary environmental monitoring instead of a compulsory one? These questions require to go beyond the mining corporations' angle and to see what local communities really want in designing government's policies with regards to new mining investments.

Since the role of the state in regulating environmental impacts is reduced and the regulation of mining companies would be subject to terms and reporting done by mining companies in EIAs, the possible consequences of such voluntary schemes will be dreadful for the local communities, whose voice should not be left aside. Since the Bergama gold mining dispute, one of the common mistakes that has repeated itself many times is to blame the local activists, who argue against new mining investments, for being involved in espionage networks. By drawing a line between real environmentalists (who are disputably presented as having the technical capacity to assess environmental impacts of a mining investment) and the ideologically oriented "other" environmentalists, both the state and mining corporations in Turkey articulate a similar moral framework in assessing what constitutes a "truthful" representation of environmental problems related to mining operations. However, such an approach puts both mining corporations and state's legitimacy under scrutiny. Instead a multi-stakeholder approach that includes representatives of all groups engaged in the mining disputes should be adopted in assessing new mining projects. This will in a way open the way for reconsideration of perspectives of local communities in designing new mining policies.