

# Environmental (in)Justice, Communities and Business in Latin America

## Introduction

Environmental conflicts among enterprises, communities and governments in Latin America emerge from *extractivism*: mining, fossil fuels and/or single-crop exports. The Environmental Justice Atlas (2018) analyses recent environmental conflicts: Colombia (126 cases), Brazil (96), Peru (80), in Mexico (72), Ecuador (62), Chile (49), Argentina (49), Bolivia (40), Venezuela (33) and Guatemala 27. The Chilean Map of the Socio-Environmental Conflict (INDH, 2018) specifies the rights violated by business enterprises along the country in 96 cases since 1998. The ongoing research points out the rule of law and the institutional development according to the country. In certain circumstances conflicts can turn into environmental crime.



### MEXICO, 44 MINING CONFLICTS

Source: Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina, 2018  
<https://www.ocmal.org/>

### CHILE, 23 ACTIVE MINING CONFLICTS

Source: Chilean Map of the Socio-Environmental Conflict (INDH, 2018)  
<http://mapaconFLICTOS.indh.cl>



**MEXICO.** In 2010 the Courts sentenced the company Minería San Xavier to stop its project in San Luis Potosí because the authorizations obtained were illegal. Corruption allowed the company to continue extracting gold and silver. They left SLP in 2015. The hill of San Pedro disappeared, which (is) was the emblem of the city.



## KEY CONCEPTS

### Socio-environmental conflicts

The term refers to social conflicts arising from a potential or real environmental disruption, or from perceived injustices in the distribution of environmental goods and harms (Dupuy, Roman & B. Mougenot, 2015). These controversies can also aim at the conditions of nonhuman entities, as it occurred in Chile recently (Sepúlveda, 2016).

### Environmental Justice (EJ)

EJ was born as a slogan for the first time in the United States during the 1980s among Black and Latino communities. They mobilized against injustices perpetrated in their communities by polluting industries and waste disposal facilities. It later became an analytical frame, largely in relation to concerns about the unequal distribution of social and environmental costs between different human groups, classes, ethnicities but also in relation to gender and age (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2018)

### Extractivism in Latin America

To talk about 'extractive industries' is a conceptual misconception. An industry modifies primary goods, and adds an extra economic value to those transformed primary goods. Nevertheless, it insists on the image of extractivism as an industry in different sources such as the WB, and governmental and business discourses. It aims at evoking images of factories full of blue collar workers. It's an abuse just to conquer social support for mining and oil entrepreneurs, but with no foundation in practical and conceptual levels (Gudynas, 2015)

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**CHILE.** In 2018 the Superintendency of the Environment sanctioned the mining company BHP Billiton and ordered to stop the operations of the Pascua Lama project, started in 1996. Performance failures mentioned: intervention of high Andean water meadows, affection of different species of flora and fauna (among them, those ones protected by the conservation framework), incomplete monitoring of glaciers, spreading of toxic waters to the river Estrecho without comply the norms of water-safety standards. One of the three new Environmental Courts played a huge role to point out the damage caused

