

**Radical Planning: Decolonizing Extractivism in Alberta and the Democratic Republic of  
Congo**

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## Abstract:

This research has been conducted with the intention of introducing and connecting concepts of decolonization to the field of urban & regional planning. It argues that planning as a study and discipline has been historically subjected to and utilised by colonial and imperial processes and that states like Canada are implicated in natural resource exploitation across various communities both at a domestic level and at an international stage. In this paper, I argue this Western driven mining has intersected with planning and colonial history in several major ways, with both Indigenous peoples in the Wood Buffalo Region and several cities in the Democratic Republic of Congo experiencing a form of Canadian mining hegemony in respect to its mining policies and practices. Such practices I argue has resulted in a displacement within the urban and rural form which has had often catastrophic consequences for subsistence living and city development alike.

## Foreword:

This paper fulfils the requirements of the MES degree through bridging the gaps in literature between (de)colonial studies, hegemony, urban & regional planning, and urban & rural development. It achieves this through introducing and connecting two concepts to the field of planning; 'mineral urbanisation' and 'mineral based disenfranchisement' as a way of implicating the role of Canadian extractivism in both diminishing and altering the built form of post-colonial regions (The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo & the Democratic Republic of Congo). Furthermore, this paper emphasises the role planning has had in perpetuating historical colonial and imperial relationships as well as modern neo-imperial relationships founded upon unequal social, political, and economic relationships. It argues planning in many respects is deeply colonial at its roots and this can be observed in the behaviour of states such as Canada both domestically and internationally.

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## **Introduction to Decolonizing Planning**

The purpose of this major research paper is to explore decolonizing planning theory as a vehicle for urban and regional change, and to demonstrate why it is imperative to establish such theories of change within mainstream planning. With my research, I am interested in identifying the ways in which some post-colonial regions have been included (or excluded) from the process of redevelopment, as well as how the built space and natural environment have been utilised or exploited by Canada to address specific industrialization needs at a wider international stage. With a focus on the relationship between Indigenous communities and the Canadian state, as well as Canada's mining practice globally, I argue that extractivism within Northern Alberta and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have intersected with planning and colonial history in several major ways. With regard to Alberta, I argue Indigenous peoples in the Wood Buffalo Region have experienced a form of 'mineral based disenfranchisement' as a result of socioeconomic exclusion and environmental degradation. In respect to the DRC, my research suggests the expansion of Western driven mining has resulted in what some scholars have defined as 'mineral urbanisation', resulting in a continuation of post-colonial violence and unplanned city growth. The broader purpose of this research is to reveal how planning structures have led and supported the decolonising efforts of actors in the international system. The particular focus here is the unique and transformative nature of decolonising efforts, how they can re-imagine and reshape human settlements (urban, rural environment, etc.), as well as how they can be used as examples to support future projects.

My research is furthermore concerned with the intersection between regional planning documents, initiatives, and extractive projects. It aims to answer the question, how does extractivism affect the rural and urban form? I will explore this concept of new emerging urbanisation in Africa, where it is argued such systemic trends can be viewed in countries such as Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the form of rapid "unplanned" and

“unregulated” urbanisation resulting in a phenomenon some scholars have attempted to define as “mineral urbanisation” (Bryceson, 2012, 2022). This will be my attempt to address the underlying linkages between colonialism, urban development, and natural resource extraction (as well as how such forms are reproduced by Canadian practice in particular). I also explore the implications of such development practices for communities in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo with the understanding that such communities have been historically and hegemonically excluded from ownership, entitlement, and employment. Subsequently, in the context of DRC, I introduce the emerging concept of ‘mineral urbanisation’ in the Global South to understand and explain some of the rapid unplanned and unregulated growth in cities. I carry this out through a comparison of master planning documents concerning Alberta and South Kivu and how they intersect with Canadian colonial history.

### Research Timeline & Methodology

The intention of my research is to challenge how mainstream planning is understood within both academia and the professional field. It argues that a general failure to connect decolonial studies to planning praxis leaves planning and several crucial planning related activities vulnerable at both the local, regional, and international stages. As a result, it will attempt to explicitly outline some of the ways in which planning praxis, rhetoric, and theory neglects neo-colonial issues as a part of planning related phenomenon. Furthermore, it is argued that including decolonizing studies within planning discourse enriches the field of study, and also demystifies the relationship between politics and urban planning as the link between planning and (de)colonisation is intrinsic to the built form. The paper focuses particularly on planning documents for the South Kivu region in the DRC and treaty rights violations in the Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality in Alberta. In exploring these plans, I selected information and data I believe is related and symbolises conventional Euro-centric planning concepts, theories, practice and planning techniques driven by the assumption of

colonial-built form. In my paper I argue that a marker of conventional Euro-centric planning is the construction of infrastructure dedicated to appropriating the local space and resources such as highways, bridges, roads, and industrial and manufacturing plants to support extraction. These pieces of infrastructure are naturally colonial in these settings as they are constructed on appropriated Indigenous/colonised land, and in Canada are the result of Canadian colonial enterprise and Canadian colonial hegemony-seeking. I borrow concepts of internal colonialism and argue that in respect to Alberta, I believe current planning practices ought to be countered by Indigenous planning principles and practices which offer opportunities for the enfranchisement of Indigenous people. In respect to the DRC, I argue that Canadian mining companies are taking advantage of local conditions giving rise to informal mines resulting in chaos such as war, gendered violence, and informal urban growth in places such as Bukavu.

Methodologically my approach involved composing research notes on neo-Gramscian theory, further details on African and North American extractivism, and concluding research on Canadian political economy with the intent to establish Canada as a hegemonic-behaving actor domestically and in the international system. Though interviews were not conducted, research into academic and official government planning policy reports, structural adjustment strategies, and academic reviews were explored. This involves a review of several policy reports including regional Albertan reports; a review of Global North affairs within Africa; a particular focus on Canadian mining practice and how it intersects with global politics; and third world literature on extractivism and Canadian hegemonic practice. I draw from such documents, policy prescriptions in regards to both natural resource extraction as well as plans to manage Indigenous communities during and after development. Furthermore, though not a health policy report, I examine linkages to the negative consequences of extraction in both regions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Fossil fuel extraction harming indigenous communities"  
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/fossil-fuel-extraction-harming-indigenous-communities/>

This included reviewing a detailed report on some of the environmental and human rights violations in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as well as studying the reproduction of colonial relationships through Canadian investment in Africa, cited further below. I explore the relationship between the Global North and South, outline the necessary historical context of mining projects, and detail the sociocultural and political-economic impacts they have had on cities and regions. I contrast these relations with the radical planning efforts of decolonizing actors aiming to achieve counter-hegemony through counter-planning initiatives. As a result, my research details hegemonic extraction by the Canadian state on Indigenous land in North America in parallel with Canadian supported neo-extractivism in Africa. In another section, I focus on what has been missing through a radical planning perspective and how to reconcile missing policy prescriptions. I describe the ways in which Canada is implicated in human rights violations and neo-colonialism, as well as provide recommendations based upon radical planning initiatives. This is done in an attempt to reconcile with Indigenous efforts of land reclamation (OPPI, 2019).

Some critiques and policy adjustments based upon radical planning principles are also advocated as vehicles for decolonizing exploited and appropriated land. Here it is crucial to note as Clifford Atleo (Kam'ayaam/Chachim'multhnii, 2014) suggests, there is an intrinsic link between gender and decolonization (including race, language, and ethnicity) (pp. 193-194). Research literature on third world radical planning with specific case studies of Canada in North America (e.g. Fort McMurray) analysis and documentation of both media reports and basic historical documents will be used to support my overall thesis; that a general failure to connect decolonial studies to planning praxis leaves planning and several crucial planning related activities vulnerable to perpetuating colonial relations at the local, regional, and international levels.

In short, as an effort to contribute to the growing literature, I analyse planning in major post-colonial states and their cities with relation to extraction, trace their historical development and political economy, as well as plans to overcome their respective socio-economic challenges. Plans for particular communities in the Alberta region in Canada and the southern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo serve as the main foci. Below, I provide a brief historical overview before identifying where and how the two cases intersect with Canadian colonial practice as well as how radical planning can detangle this dynamic and support developmental progress in these regions.

## **Planning & Colonialism**

In order to set an argument for a deepened understanding between planning and decolonial studies, a definitive conceptual link between “decolonization” and “planning” is imperative. According to Oren Yiftachel, “planning” can be defined as “...the formulation, content, and implementation of spatial public policies” and includes “all public policies that affect urban and regional development, zoning, and land use” (Yiftachel, 1998, p. 396). It is this process of spatial reordering “to meet desirable social outcomes” that assumes the literal appropriation of land and people in the context of colonial expansion (ibid). According to Libby Porter, this includes both the process and material effects of the [forced] appropriation of land by a foreign power and the construction of a “racialised hierarchy of difference within and through that appropriation” (Porter, 2006, p. 383). This unequal construct serves as the foundation for not only the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, but also the state and its institutions (markets, governments, legal, schooling) (ibid).

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) expand on this understanding of colonialism, arguing that there are generally two forms or methods of colonialism which occur as a result of foreign expansion efforts; (a) external and (b) internal colonialism. (a) External colonialism

refers to the “expropriation of fragments of Indigenous worlds” to fuel colonial efforts, or in other words, a process in which wealth is constructed through the direct exploitation of animals, plants, and human beings. (b) Internal colonialism refers to the “biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the “domestic” borders of the imperial nation” (ibid). The intrinsic and deeply historical connection between colonialism, politics, and urban planning can be found within the concept of “internal colonialism” as within internal colonialism, planning has had a major role in reasserting such systems of oppression throughout history as they have designed, developed, and managed structures in postcolonial cities and states such as town planning (Njoh, 2009; Glotzer, 2018). Under internal colonialism, both physical spaces and their occupants are managed, controlled, and coerced through structural forces of domination, which includes institutions such as prisons, schools, and policing, as well as systems of physical dispossession, surveillance, and criminalization (ibid). Furthermore,

To the colonists, the establishment of settlements is “synonymous with development and progress” and the literal construction of towns and cities is one of the activities which distinctly defines settler-colonial relationships (Porter & Yiftachel, 2019, p. 177). This represents a form of hegemonic consent building as in other terms, the dispossession of colonised peoples is legitimated through the mechanisms of urbanisation, which after certain periods, is taken for cultural development and progress. Furthermore and as a result, the activities of planning cannot be disassociated from “the total cultural, economic and social system of which they are a part of” as the history of [modern] planning is deeply colonial and it has served to reinforce both the colonial settlement of territories and its people (King, 1978), (Porter, 2006). For this research paper, I focus on these particular points as they indicate a form of colonial extraction in which Canada is directly implicated both as a foreign extractor of minerals as well as a domestic colonial appropriator of oil sands. In addition, “decolonization” on the other hand,

relates to matters of the opposite nature, that is, repossession, freedoms, self-determination, and inclusion in post-colonial states. I argue that planning, colonialism, and hegemony intersect both generally as well as within Canadian neo-colonialism.

## Hegemony

There are a variety of definitions of what constitutes hegemony. My research paper does not adopt some forms of neo-realist 'hegemony' which focus on relations of power based on physical capacity (primarily military capacity) as determining power structures between two actors. Alternatively, I apply the Gramscian understanding of hegemony and argue it accurately captures several of the aforementioned cases and strategies of colonial hegemony and does not reduce power-relations to mere inequalities of physical capacity. According to Cox (1983), Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be traced from two other major sources, Niccolo Machiavelli and Vladimir Lenin (*ibid*, pp. 50-54). Both men applied a concept of hegemony to understand the ruling elites of their respective societies and how they maintained control of subordinate classes. In short, both strands of hegemony included an analysis of (class) dominance through the application of coercion and consent, as a means to both achieve positions of leadership while suppressing revolutionary expressions through conformity to the authority of the ruling elite (*ibid*, p. 50). In other words, power is consolidated and directed as a cultural norm both within and external to, a pre-existing ruling state. This concept of hegemony, furthermore, relies on historicism as a necessary component within its theoretical framework. As Cox argues, it is important to determine when a period of hegemony begins and ends, that is to say, hegemonic political economies are not absolute but always shifting (*ibid*, pp. 59-60). Though there is no single period of hegemonic dominance by any given state, each hegemonic period across space and time shares certain political, economic, and social characteristics (*ibid*).

For example, Cox states that;

“[A period of hegemony] is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production which penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production [and] it is also a complex of international social relationships which connect the social classes of the different countries (ibid, p. 60).

‘World hegemony’, as Cox puts it, is “describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three” (ibid, p. 62). The formation of this structure is thus expressed in “universal norms, institutions and mechanisms which lay down general rules of behaviour for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries” (ibid). In other words, a hegemonic power establishes the rules in which the dominant global mode of production operates within (ibid, p. 62). Cox continues his analysis of world hegemony by suggesting there are five features of international organisation which express the roles of hegemonic authority. (1) They embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from peripheral countries and (5) they absorb counter hegemonic ideas (ibid). This model of hegemony, rather than attempting to conceptualise relationships among varying governing states within the international realm, will focus on conceptualising two case studies in regional and international planning practice as examples which manifest these five features. The planning relationship between Indigenous communities and the Canadian state, as well as the implications of Canadian miners activities for planning in the DRC are explored as exemplifying hegemonic structures of dispossession and extraction in which classes, countries and regions are subordinated by a ruling power through a combination of coercion and consent (Carmody, Kragelund, & Riberedo, 2020, p. 34; Robert Cox, 1983; Konrad, 2012).

## Radical Planning

Though ground-breaking in terms of analysis, missing from Robert Cox's framework is a history of colonialism. Although Cox arguably operates with the assumption of colonial infrastructure in the international system, an objective within this major research paper is to examine radical planning approaches to urban & regional planning which attempt to decolonize as a counter-hegemonic practice. This is important to note as the legacies of colonial ventures and transatlantic slavery and extractive trades have not disappeared, but rather, continue to shape various international relationships and financial institutions in the modern world. This dynamic, furthermore, has resulted in the formation of unequal and neo-colonial political economic structures such as extractivism and labour exploitation (Gordon & Webber, 2008; Girvan 2017; Moore & Rocha, 2019). This is not necessarily a criticism of Robert Cox, however, as his theoretical ideas of power and struggle can be applied to historicise current dynamics of social relationships.

In this vein, planning has been at least partly responsible for establishing many structures of oppression in colonial and postcolonial states. Maali Zeid and Salem Thawaba (2018) explain that counter-planning is contextualised as the local struggle against controlling and colonial powers (ibid, p. 12). Accordingly, theories define counter plans as schemes prepared by local communities seeking "to confront the plans of mainstream planning authority that do not serve the local inhabitants' needs or objectives" (ibid). Counter-planning thus provides us with a framework to reconfigure dominant post-colonial era planning institutions, and it is this link which has led me to connect the concepts of hegemony and (de)colonialism to the study of urban and regional planning. Furthermore, and in the context of settler colonial states, my research paper explores the concept of counter-planning in relation to organised efforts to maintain the rights of those who have been dispossessed on the land. Zeid and Thawaba articulate it simply when they write that the relationship between planning

and power is inarguably fundamental as the planning of physical spaces can and has been used as a means to serve political ambitions, and power can easily change the landscape accordingly (ibid; p. 1-24). This is a step away from mainstream planning theories which tend to identify planning as a technical tool used by planners to guide decision makers. This distinction between radical planning praxis and mainstream planning is necessary to understand two major avenues to (de)colonising planning: an ideological (de)construction and a physical space planning component (ibid).

The emergence of radical urban planning praxis in recent decades gave witness to the rise of counter-planning as an initiative to include and enfranchise disenfranchised groups, marginalised identities, and persecuted peoples into their respective political societies (Beard, V. A. 2003). As Fayola Jacobs (2019) explains, it is possible to understand the radical planning literature from the standpoint of the global south where people struggle for inclusion within colonial and post-colonial regimes as a vehicle for deconstructing colonial planning practices of the global north (ibid, pp. 27-28). As Jacobs writes, this can allow planners to look into radical planning literature for critical thinking in terms of race, gender and, especially, class as such dynamics offer an historicized view indispensable to counter-hegemonic planning practices (ibid). Radical planning thus serves as a means to critically challenge oppressive forces and planning structures which offer “traditional” lenses to achieve “development” and “practice”. Within global south literature, many including Faranak Miraftab have attempted to characterise the guiding principles for insurgent planning practices, describing them as counter-hegemonic, transgressive and imaginative. (2009, pp. 4, 5, 25). To proponents of radical planning and counter-planning, the struggle is ideological as much as it is physically constructive regarding the built form.

Miraftab writes that the insights gained from the Global South and its anti-colonial struggles largely happened through the writings of post-colonial intellectuals who taught that

the liberation of the colonies could happen only through “decolonizing the mind” (ibid; Fanon 1986).

“The black consciousness movement teaches us that “the only way to bring about a defeat of black feelings of inferiority was to look anew at the black person to discover what it was that lent him/her so easily to denigrate himself/herself”. Liberation needs a new consciousness, one that is recovered from the colonial moral injury, the profound alienation that believed development of the colony could happen only “upon condition of rejecting itself” and wholesale importing of non-African scenarios and solutions (Ahluwalia and Zegeye 2001: 460; Davidson 1992:199).” (Miraftab, 2009. p. 23)

Consequently, “insurgent planning is transgressive against false dichotomies of colonialism in time, place, and action. They are counter-hegemonic in that they destabilise the normalised order of things; they transgress time and place by locating historical memory and transnational consciousness at the heart of their practices (ibid, p. 25).

My research paper echoes Miraftab in arguing that substantive planning in this era must decolonize planning practice first via imagination and questioning capitalist assumptions which insist on modernization; and second by recognizing how “the ideal of the Western city has been deployed historically in the colonial era” and now in the neoliberal era to advance a paradigm of development and capital accumulation (Miraftab, 2009). This requires addressing spaces within the realm of praxis and practice, bringing together ideology and physical space in a deconstructive and decolonial manner. The inability to understand urban and regional planning in this manner causes a rupture in purported “inclusive planning” process, as the constructed social roles of the oppressor and oppressed may well continue in

such an “inclusive” planning process (ibid). Removing such historicized consciousness is a constitutive principle of insurgent planning (ibid, pp. 22-24)

As Annette Koh explains, decolonization within planning is not merely “a critical lens” or a “pointed metaphor”, but rather it is a project with practical aims (Koh 2018). Decolonizing planning attempts to reconstruct legal and regulatory regimes, reconfiguring planning institutions and the field’s compulsion to prioritise property values over people’s needs (ibid). It is a process of challenging the fundamental and historical nature of the institutions and social mechanisms of oppression (colonialism and settler colonialism). For her, decolonizing planning is both “a desired outcome and a process for addressing planning’s dangerous tendency to impose a singular vision on the world around us”, or in other words tacitly accept cultural norms and understandings of urban & regional planning which are hegemonic in nature (Koh, 2019). A failure to confront such forms of colonisation in planning’s conceptual frames prevents us from disentangling the field from “the harms we have done in the name of progress”, instead drawing an implicit linkage between “development”, “urbanisation”, and “urban planning” (ibid). For the Global North, the culture and institutions of neo-colonialism are pre-existing ones, and such forms of colonial dispossession and control continue to linger in modern states like Canada and the United States, where hegemonic capital growth has been routinely favoured over the planned development of Indigenous and other minority communities.

Furthermore, decolonizing planning acknowledges that people throughout history have been, and continue to be, profoundly affected by colonial processes. For example, as Heather Dorries and Laura Harjo (2020) point out, the violence intrinsic to settler colonialism is often directed toward women which includes both private (i.e. individual) and collective (i.e. state, societal) forms of abuse (physical, sexual, mental, and institutional) (p. 212). Not only is this

form of violence on-going, but in many instances it is also state-sanctioned (ibid). In short, planning makes assumptions and philosophies about place, identity, and governance that are colonial in their roots, and these assumptions and philosophies are manifested in the physical space as development projects, zoning plans, and other technical planning practices (Porter, 2006, 393). Decolonizing planning thus offers us a process and framework to challenge injustice and colonial planning culture.

### **DRC: Canada in the African continent**

As Canada's internal expansionary activities cannot be understood outside a settler-colonial context, its contemporary global mining involvements cannot be fully understood if they are regarded merely as an economic phenomenon of post-Cold War "globalisation". Rather as Paula Butler explains, they must be conceptualised as manifesting a much longer historical trajectory of European and Euro-American imperialism that is now being reconfigured in more complex terms (Butler, 2015, pg;7-8). As some scholars have noted, there is a general agreement that the international operations of Canadian registered mining companies have resulted in considerable social and environmental cost to developing countries and communities through generating conflict within the host nation (Jacobs, 2013; p. 27). It is also widely agreed that the international expansion of Canadian mining companies beginning in the 1980s had been a response to the "Washington Consensus,"<sup>2</sup> which entailed new mining legislation introduced into mineral rich Global South countries notably at the initiative of the Bretton Woods Institutions (Butler, ibid;pg 10-11). This global shift towards neoliberal policies and mining-led structural adjustment programs sought to reorient development policy and national political economies in an effort to support the private sector and markets as drivers of economic growth (ibid). They furthermore often included multi-year loans for reforms

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<sup>2</sup> A set of economic reform policies administered to third world and developing states beginning in the 1980s

specifically aimed at “harmonising” mining legislation and creating a favourable environment for foreign investors (ibid) (Jacobs, 2013; pg 46).

Such new mining codes attempted to substantially liberalise legislation and redefine the roles of state enterprises, focused on generating revenue and rejecting state-led socio-economic development mining policies (ibid). Effectively undermining domestic driven mining operations, as well as the ability of governments to ensure that mining activities can contribute to poverty reduction and building sustainable economies (ibid; pg. 9, 47) (Butler, 2015; pg 7-8). As a result, the Canadian state in its promotion of its own Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) led mining and development strategies have played a central role in reducing policy options for SSA states; thereby undermining the ability of host countries to ensure that FDI contributes to economically sustainable development (ibid). Thus, when discussing Canada’s relationship to the African continent and examining Canadian policies in Africa extractivism it is necessary to view this relationship with a Global North to South lens as these policies often emulate the policies laid out by other international institutions. Furthermore, by following their lead, Canada is implicated in generating human rights violence, negligence, natural resource exploitation, and policy reforms designed to deregulate state ownership over mining rights, and in this manner has contributed to a culture of colonialism (Deneault and Sacher, 2019). Canada has relatively recently emerged as a global mining power and it is largely within this context that Canada has become a major source of mining capital and policy advice for SSA (Jacobs, 2013; pg 2-8). Given the growing extent of such activities my research paper conceptualises Canada as a hegemonic imperialist actor at the international stage (relative to Global South nations) (Deneault and Sacher, 2019).

Canadian Mining Investment Profile in Sub-Saharan Africa

My paper is concerned with the ways colonial dynamics are expressed in Canadian mining practice including how colonial relationships are reproduced through internal and bi-lateral mining trade. Despite historical waves of violent civil unrest and war, countries like Canada have entered the Central African landscape and Copperbelt (such as the DRC and Zambia) to promote mining as a major economic activity (Jacobs, 2013) (Canadian Mining, 2023). In some cases, mining done by Canadian registered firms has also been associated with the cause of violence and war as, for example, the DRC during much of the mid 2000s commodity price boom (ibid; Dent 2007). Such activities follow the near collapse of the market and disruptions to normal mining activities which can be attributed to civil war and conflict throughout the 1970s and 1990s (Congolese Civil War) and policy interventions by international institutions (Aoul, Revil, Sarrasin, Campbell; 2000).<sup>3</sup>

Since 1995, the Congolese mining sector has undergone profound transformations where large sectors of industry largely owned by the State were sold off to private investors. Successive DRC governments were successful in attracting a number of foreign investors, particularly Canadian mining and exploration companies, for new grassroots and artisanal exploration (ibid). Within the last two decades, the Canadian government has claimed that, due to insights garnered from its domestic mining industry, it is now a major global centre for raising mining capital, thus positioning the mining sector as key to this country's new global identity (Butler, 2015; Jacobs, 2013). This value of bilateral trade in the mining sector is one of several ways of looking at Canada's engagement in the sector globally, and specifically in Africa. Between 2001 and 2010, Canadian mining investment in African countries rose from C\$2.87 billion to over C\$23.6 billion; and by December 2010, mining companies listed on the TSE held 709 properties in African countries (Butler 2015, pg. 10). As a result, mining has transformed into the single largest industry in Canada's bilateral trade, accounting for around 23% of

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<sup>3</sup> *Appendix 2 Mining Investment in Areas of Conflict*, [www.ieim.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/appendix2.pdf](http://www.ieim.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/appendix2.pdf). Accessed 20 Sep. 2023.

Canada's imports (ibid). The total stock of Canadian mining assets in Africa is estimated at C\$31.6 billion in 2011 while the total value of all commodities produced by Canadian owned mines in Africa, in 2012 was approximately \$7.6 billion. By 2020, Africa had the second-highest value (~20%) of Canadian Mining Assets (CMAs) in the world at \$36.5 billion.<sup>4</sup> Canadian firms were most active in East Africa, with \$12.7 billion on the ground in 2011. West Africa came next with \$9.9 billion invested, followed by Southern Africa (\$4.9 billion), Central Africa (\$3.4 billion), and North Africa (\$36.7 million) (Galvin, 2022).

In Africa, nation-states' urbanisation trends have shown considerable variation over the past half century. As Deborah Bryceson (2012, 2022) writes, though much has been written about contestation over land and mineral rights in the Global South, the impact of mining on settlement, "notably its catalytic and fluctuating effects on migration and urban growth' has been largely ignored. My paper contributes to this growing literature on the impact of mining on urban development, arguing such mining activities have fostered and led to what can be referred to as 'mineral urbanisation' within Africa (ibid). This intervention furthermore has contributed to the cycle of colonial and post-colonial relationships; in addition to and at the expense of a region's natural resource, Canada again is implicated as a colonial actor. I argue this is witnessed within the DRC, particularly its southern regions.

### Mineral Urbanisation

Mineral urbanisation or mining induced urbanisation, as some scholars have argued, is the interaction between processes of mineral extraction and urbanisation (Bryceson, D., and MacKinnon, D, 2012). As Bryceson and MacKinnon remind us, urbanisation may be understood as the gathering of people and market activities due to a number of influences and as a result, development affects urbanisation as one of the activities that forces migration of people and labour is that of mining. They define 'mineralised urbanisation' as the influence of

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<sup>4</sup> Total CMA overseas by 2020, 188 billion - Africa 36.5 = 19.4%

mineral production cycles and commodity chains on urban growth and settlement patterns at local, regional and national levels (ibid). In other terms, it relates to the force of mining booms and busts on nation-states and is catalysed by emergence of mineral discovery and/or rising global mineral prices through which large-scale or artisanal mining becomes profitable or widespread (Bryceson, 2022). As a result of such forces, new investments occur and mine-led population movement result in the formation of new settlements as well as local divisions of labour mobilising around new industries (ibid).

External capital not only plays an important role in the spatial pattern of the national economy, but also influences a country's urban settlement hierarchy either directly or indirectly (ibid). Artisanal mining tends to appear first and is most often associated with the rapid growth of small towns and regional centres, which commonly wanes as the mineral supply is depleted or unreachable with artisanal technology (ibid). This often leads to the expansion of large-scale corporate mining, more often than not under foreign ownership, management and control. Global interests supersede local interests and this is a critical point of contention as many African governments have limited state capacity and power to broker deals to ensure benefits for the local mining population and the region (Hilson and Yakovleva 2007, ibid). Such patterns of development are observable within the Democratic Republic of Congo's South Kivu province where several planners and scholars have noted that, in recent years, the city has experienced exponential population growth (Cléophace, et. al, 2021). There have been few studies that link urban growth and its impacts on the urban population, leading scholars to hypothesise that the precarious socio-economic situation of the inhabitants of the city of Bukavu is due to the anarchic urbanisation of the rural exodus. A consequence of an increased presence of international mining is an accelerated form of development which Cléophace, Bakulikira Jean-Paul, Nduwimana André and others (et al, 2021) note spurs an exceptionally rapid urbanisation rates (more than 40% in 2014 compared to 26.4% for the

previous decade and almost the same rates for future projections, i.e. in 2024 and 2034). The notable characteristic of this form of urbanisation witnessed in the southern Democratic Republic of Congo is its breakdown of traditional agriculture-oriented structures, resulting in the concentration of population and industry in expanding urban landscapes (Emuze, F and Hauptfleisch 2014; pg. 3; Biao, Chuang-lin and Mao-sheng, 2006). It is in this manner that deagrarianization and rapid urban growth are connected and observable symptoms of mineral urbanisation.

Deagrarianization is defined as a process of: (i) economic activity reorientation (livelihood), (ii) occupational adjustment (work activity), (iii) spatial realignment of human settlement (residence) away from agrarian patterns and (iv) social re-identification, all entailing movement away from agrarian patterns in local, regional and economies (Bryceson, 2002; pg. 99). Largely due to mining and extraction activities, deagrarianization is an on-going urban and rural process in Africa, resulting in sectoral transformation, which can be found within "a declining proportion of the national population and total labour time engaged in agriculture" (Bryceson 1996, 1997 & 2018) According to the World Bank statistics, in 1965, the percentage of total GDP derived from agriculture was 40% in sub-Saharan Africa and has decreased to 32% by 1990. In 2021, it had reduced drastically to 17%<sup>5</sup>. This is due largely to the widespread adoption of neo-liberal policies by African governments which "propelled rural Africans to search for remunerative forms of income" (Bryceson, 2000). Urban growth, furthermore, in the sparsely populated Copperbelt relied on migrant labour from rural areas to ensure a workforce for the mines (Iva Peša, 2020; pg. 530). As a result, large numbers gravitated towards artisanal mining with the expectation of high earnings, and this includes rebel armies seeking financial resources, notably from diamonds, to wage civil war, which placed mining in the thick of recent African history (Bryceson, D., and MacKinnon, D. 2012).

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<sup>5</sup> *World Bank Open Data*. (n.d.). World Bank Open Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZG>

## Bukavu

The city of Bukavu is located in South Kivu province, eastern DR Congo, the total area of the city is ~43.3 km<sup>2</sup> and is divided into three municipalities: Kadutu (~6.68 km<sup>2</sup>), Ibanda (~13.38 km<sup>2</sup>), and Bagira (~23.26 km<sup>2</sup>). In an effort to identify habitable areas, Muhaya and other scholars (2022) have used GIS and Remote Sensing techniques to estimate the built-up suitable areas in Bukavu taking into account the slopes, rivers, exclusion zones, protected zones, lakes, roads, identified landslides areas, erosion and flooding (Muhaya, et al, 2022). These exclusion areas were “subtracted from the total city area to determine the suitable areas and the results showed only 68.6% (~29.7 km<sup>2</sup>) are suitable for built-up” which is problematic as based on their 2016 estimation, the population will double by 2030 and triple by 2050 (ibid). In attempting to answer what counter-planning strategies have been set in place to manage western mining expansion into the SSA, my paper asks what are the local urban responses to mining and extraction within the DRC? Scholars (ibid) write that with respect to Bukavu’s municipal planning projects, 426,454 people will have to be relocated from the city to restore the town’s urban planning standards . According to them, the plan is to;

“...Reorient the surplus into new cities to reduce waste of space, thus, a policy of creating new satellite cities has been proposed in an attempt to [restructure and strengthen] the national and regional urban framework while reducing pressure exerted on the big cities” (Cléophas, et al, 2021, pg. 204).

A surplus of ~500,854 people was found in Bukavu; this value was split into two groups: half (~250,427) will be relocated in the northern axis, adding to the 246,071 people that already live in the area according to DPS statistics (ibid). This acceleration has been attributed to the rise of informality in the region, causing irregular and unplanned urban sprawl to emerge. Indeed, between 1909 to 2018 the urban population in Bukavu increased from 114 to 800,574 (976,372

inhabitants in 2016 and 1,037,645 inhabitants in 2018) (ibid) (INS, 2019) (Provincial Statistics Institute, 2012) (Cléophaçe, et al, 2021). The scholars also note high natural rates of population growth with high birth and fertility rates (5.1% and 7.7% for Kinshasa, for example), however many argue more recent population growth in the city of Bukavu is a function of rural exodus to the city. This is a phenomenon important to note as the average density of Bukavu's hinterland is the highest in the country (DR Congo) (Muhaya, et al, 2022).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the explosive and uncontrolled population growth in cities like Kinshasa and Mbuji-Mayi has led to urban sprawl, giving rise to insecure and poorly-planned neighbourhoods (ibid). Researchers point out that social and criminal violence has developed in these neighbourhoods and the "lack of public lighting and access points to water exposes girls to sexual assault, including rape." (IDRC, pg. 2)

This analysis is further supported by scholars who suggest rural exodus as the main catalyst for this form of urbanisation (Muhaya, et al, 2022). Although their estimation of 686,854 people in 2016 differs from other scholars (Cléophaçe, et al, 2021), they agree with a high population projection, suggesting an exponential rise of 1,386,238 by 2030 and 2,552,766 people by 2050 (Muhaya, et al 2022). Their work supports findings that urban migration is characterised by the erosion of basic socio-economic infrastructure (statehouses, roads, bridges, engineering structures, factories, etc.) and of the town's infrastructure (ibid, pg. 3). Like many other sub-Saharan cities, the people of Bukavu already live in precarious conditions with restricted access to safe drinking water and sanitation, adequate housing conditions and infrastructure, as well as the number of meals per day (ibid). Other environmental issues such as flooding, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and habitat losses has not only contributed to this precarity, but has also led to the building of areas that are 'not suitable for construction, such as river banks, lakes, and even roads with important consequences on the environment and

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<sup>6</sup> UN HABITAT 2016 Report, entitled "For a Better Urban Future"

production (Cléophae, 2021 pg. 202). This phenomenon has resulted in a decline in the production of various markets and movement of people and their goods, for example Tilapia and Limnothrissa (the most consumed fish) production on Kivu lake Bukavian coasts went from 841 to 965 tonnes from 1986 to 1997; and dropped to 723 tonnes in 2002 and 423 tonnes in 2015 (INS, 2015) (DSCR, 2010) (Muhaya, Valéry Ntamusimwa, et al, 2022, pg. 3) Though the scholars did not directly attribute such urban processes to ‘mineral urbanisation’, my paper aims to connect the two theories of change in Sub-Saharan Africa, arguing mineral urbanisation adequately explains this phenomenon. Again, this arises in part from deagrarianization which has grown in the Sub-Saharan Copperbelt since mining became a major economic activity. Such industrial opportunities have also resulted in the rise of informal housing and settlement booms, as well as poverty Bryceson, D., and MacKinnon, D. 2012, pg. 16).

### **The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Alberta, Canada)**

As Warren Bernauer (2019) writes, Canadian scholars during the 1970s frequently treated the extractive economy located in northern Canada as a component of “internal-colonialism”. For such scholars, internal-colonialism was partially a result of an uneven development within Canada’s political economy, a spatial relationship which is often referred to as a “core” and a “periphery” (ibid). The core in the context of Canada includes metropolitan centres in the south which develop at the expense of an extractive economy found at the northern hinterland periphery. It is at the periphery where most of the wealth produced by extraction – corporate profits, government royalties and taxes, economic multipliers and the resources themselves – flows to the core (ibid). In the context of Alberta, the region contains the second to third largest proven concentration of oil in the world, found in deposits of sand, clay, and bitumen (a naturally occurring hydrocarbon) within is often referred to as ‘oil sands’ or ‘tar sands’

(Government of Alberta 2008b).<sup>7</sup> Through complex industrial processes, the bitumen can be separated from the sands and processed into synthetic crude oil, one of the most important energy sources in the world. Synthetic crude oil originating from the Alberta oil sands is refined for use as gasoline, jet fuel, home heating fuels, and numerous other products (OSDC 2008a). The oil sands comprise more than 98% of Canada's 173 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and have been found to cover approximately 140,000 km<sup>2</sup> in three areas of north-eastern Alberta: the Athabasca, Peace River, and Cold Lake regions - near, in, or around the Wood Buffalo Municipality.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Wood Buffalo has experienced a new wave of extraction at several intersections throughout the regional municipality; attracting an estimated \$217 billion of capital investment (2014), with the 10 largest companies being responsible for more than half of oil and gas production in Canada.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the major actors include Suncor Energy Inc, a large integrated energy company that explores, acquires, develops, produces, and markets crude oil in Canada and internationally. Suncor's oil assets are located in the Wood Buffalo region and they have been strategically focused on developing one of the world's largest petroleum resource basins in the Athabasca's oil sands - costs estimating at a total of \$3.2 billion (ibid). Imperial Oil Limited, another integrated oil company, is engaged in the exploration, production, and sale of conventional crude oil, synthetic oil and bitumen. The company has operations in all three major Albertan oil sand areas - Peace River, Athabasca and Cold Lake. Finally, Cenovus Energy Inc, is a company with oil sands projects in northern Alberta that relies on specialised methods to drill and pump the oil to the surface (as opposed to other methods) (ibid). Cenovus also produces natural gas and oil in both Alberta and Saskatchewan (ibid). Since 2015, the oil sands market underwent massive restructuring in respect to ownership, operations, and investments as oil prices

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<sup>7</sup> *The oil sands described - Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program (RAMP)*. (n.d.). <http://www.ramp-alberta.org/resources/development/distribution.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> According to Natural Resources Canada, oil sands reserves

<sup>9</sup> Roberts, C., & Abbakumov, K. (2014). *Key companies active in Alberta Oil Sands* (By CS Calgary). [http://www.iberglobal.com/files/alberta\\_oil\\_companies.pdf](http://www.iberglobal.com/files/alberta_oil_companies.pdf)

decreased (Parkland Institute, 2018). This period witnessed the The “Big Five” (Suncor Energy, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL), Cenovus Energy, Imperial Oil, and Husky Energy) all experienced dramatic cuts to their workforce and the expansion of their oil extractive facilities. This happened as the price of oil lost nearly half of its value in the second half of 2014, and 2015 was the worst year for Alberta job losses since 1982 (ibid).

According to the model of internal colonialism – adapted from World System theory to discuss, in this case, inter-regional relationships, the core exerts political dominance over the periphery, which is dependent on the decisions made by the core (ibid; Bowles 1982; McCann 1987). This imbalance within the relationship results in the periphery being left with several negative consequences which, in the context of extraction, often includes environmental degradation and “vulnerability to boom–bust economic cycles” (ibid; Usher 1976; Watkins 1977). These scholars argue that, in addition to the general problems of peripheral capitalism (outlined above), the extractive economy is colonial because it is premised on the dispossession of land, resources and the means of subsistence from Indigenous peoples. In more recent years, scholars have suggested a more ‘multi-scalar’ analysis to the study of Canada and more specifically Alberta’s oil sands economy (Carter & Zalik, 2016). These scholars have suggested that the internal politics of Alberta can be understood through a rentier-state theory and a critical political ecology which emphasises the introduction, extraction, and production of oil sands as a key driver of imperial economic accumulation (ibid). Thus, when discussing extraction within the context of Canada, it is imperative to return to ideas of settler colonialism as the mining economy can be referred to as a form of internal-colonialism.<sup>10</sup>

My paper considers the oil sands economy within Wood Buffalo region of northeast Alberta as it relates to the discussion of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ in the Canadian political economy. I also introduce and outline a process of dispossession that may be understood as ‘mineral

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<sup>10</sup> Bernauer, W. (2019). The limits to extraction: mining and colonialism in Nunavut. *Revue Canadienne D'études Du Développement*, 40(3), 404–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2019.1629883>

disenfranchisement', defined as the marginalisation as a result of oil sands activity and other mining. In respect to extractivism and the Indigenous experience within the region, mineral disenfranchisement is colonial in the form of dispossession of livelihoods, which along with environmental degradation, is experienced by Indigenous peoples in respect to their health, culture, and dietary consumption. Furthermore, to prepare my paper I examine two municipal development plans for the Wood Buffalo region, from 2011 and 2022. Though vast in terms of information relating to mining and extraction, I confined my research to the study of the inclusion of Indigenous planning practice within extraction, as well as the inclusion of Indigenous communities and industries into the oil sands development.

### Indigenous Periphery

As Huseman and Short (2012) argue, large-scale resource extraction processes not only alienate Native peoples from their land by driving them off of it to make room for industrial activities, but also by way of the toxic by-products that put water supplies, land cover and wildlife at serious risk. This jeopardises the lives, cultures, and health of indigenous communities who depend on these resources for their continued existence. (ibid, p. 223–224) - 293. As of 2016, approximately 23,000 Indigenous peoples from 18 First Nations and 6 Métis settlements were estimated to live in the oil sands region in Northeast Alberta (Government of Canada, 2016). The disruption to Indigenous peoples and their way of life as a result of this development has been largely environmental, political, and legal. In respect to legal rights, First Nations in the area have increasingly asserted their treaty rights within the past 15 years as a means to resist mining expansion (Doucet, Tyler. et al 2024).

Ecologically, the surface mining associated with oil sands extraction in Alberta has generated over a billion cubic metres of waste, known as tailings (sands, silts, clays, and process-affected water which contain toxic organic and chemical compounds) (Cossey, H. L. et al. (2021). Most of this waste will be reclaimed and integrated into one of two types of mine closure landforms: end pit

lakes (EPLs) or terrestrial landforms with a wetland feature (ibid). The oil-sands development around several extractive sites are, however, located upstream along the Athabasca River basin of several towns and communities including Fort McMurray, Fort McKay, and Fort Chipewyan and the Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN). This implies much of the waste flows downstream into such communities.

In Fort McKay, located in the northeastern part of Alberta and home to Cree, Dene and Métis First Nations communities, large-scale oil sand extraction surrounding the community has raised concerns over the past decade about quality of the reclaimed land and the status of their treaty rights (Droitsch, D., et al (2010). Tar-sands development has completely altered the Athabasca delta and watershed landscape - through deforestation, open-pit mining (which results in water and air contamination), water based toxic contamination, as well as the disruption of natural ecosystems and Indigenous cultures (Wells, J., et al, 2008).<sup>11</sup> In 2012, the Oil Sands in Alberta accounted for 56% of Canada's total oil production, and represented a volume that is roughly equivalent to the world supply of conventional petroleum (ibid). This follows a disruption of 530 km<sup>2</sup> of the boreal forest and muskeg, and associated tailings ponds covered more than 130 km<sup>2</sup> of land by 2008 (Price 2008) as well as historic catastrophic failures such the 1970 & 1982 Suncor-related spills, both of which flowed to Lake Athabasca - and eventually led to the closure of commercial fishing on the Lake after causing illness to the nearby community of Fort McKay (Timoney and Lee 2009). A more recent (2013) spill from the Obed coal mine in Hinton released 670 million L of "coal slurry" that ended up in the Athabasca River with adverse implications for downstream environments and communities (McLachlan, S. M. (2014).

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<sup>11</sup> *Tar Sands: Environmental justice, treaty rights and Indigenous peoples.* (2008)  
. <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/tar-sands-environmental-justice-treaty-rights-and-indigenous-peoples>

In 2010, the University of Alberta (David Schindler) released a report suggesting toxicity levels were increasing within the Lakes and Rivers around the Athabasca region. The report showed 13 elements that were considered priority pollutants (PPE) were being gradually transmitted into the air and waters surrounding Fort McMurray and the Lakes and rivers of Athabasca (Schindler2010). The report further showed that the concentrations of PPEs were substantially greater in concentration downstream from development – particularly in one location in Lake Athabasca, near Fort Chipewyan. Others have confirmed (January, 2013) that since production began in the 1960s, the level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) - a byproduct of industrial operations - rose far above pre-development levels (Smol, 2013; Kurek, 2013; (McLachlan, S. M. (2014)). It has also been confirmed that sediments from the lower Athabasca River and the Peace Athabasca Delta can be toxic to invertebrates and also contain high levels of PAHs. Levels of PAHs in sediment of the Athabasca River are double those observed to induce liver cancers in fish and have increased with industrial activity between 2001-2009 (Timoney, K. P., & Lee, P. (2011). Important studies on snow transport also indicate that the Oil Sands now increase loadings of toxic PAHs to the Athabasca River through water and air (e.g. Kelly et al. 2009, 2010).

This was a significant discovery as PAHs have been well documented as a producer of cancer, causing widespread concern for communities located downstream from the Oil Sands (Chen 2009; McLachlan, S. M. 2014).<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is essential to better understand these changes, especially as they relate to animals and plants that are harvested for food and for cultural purposes (McLachlan, S. M. (2014). As a result of this high level of toxicity, the fish living within Athabasca's Lakes and Rivers have developed several deformities, thus making them unavailable for safe consumption by the Indigenous peoples within the region (ibid). Arsenic levels were high enough in muskrat and moose muscle; duck, moose, and muskrat livers; and moose and duck kidneys to be of concern for young children. Cadmium levels were again elevated in moose

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<sup>12</sup> A 2008 health study commissioned by the Nunee Health Authority of Fort Chipewyan

kidney and liver samples but also those of beaver and ducks, although muskrat samples were again low. Mercury levels were also high for duck muscle, kidneys, and livers as well as moose and muskrat kidneys, especially for children. In contrast to the last phase of the study, selenium levels were high enough in the muscle, kidney, and livers of all wildlife species to be of concern for adults and children alike (ibid).

## Indigenous Planning

In respect to Indigenous communities, planners remind us that the usual focus has been how professional planners engage Indigenous Peoples in their plans whether they are municipal plans, energy projects, or other planning matters. Indigenous Peoples, however, have had their own plans on their own land as the Indigenous Planning Perspectives Task Force (IPPTF, 2019. pg. 10) explain. Though not exclusive to the Wood Buffalo region, OPPI created the IPPTF to establish context and outline recommendations to achieve respectful collaboration with Indigenous People, communities, and planners (ibid). This was arguably done with the intent to introduce and reinforce Indigenous planning principles into decision making processes as the OPPI recognizes that “understanding and implementing the principles of relationship building and treaty relations will require strong Indigenous participation and leadership in all aspects of planning” (ibid). According to the Task Force , Indigenous people have been carrying out their own planning for millennia, prior to colonisation and in the present day, and were able to develop in a self-determined fashion or at least make choices on and off the land (ibid). As a result, Indigenous Peoples have their own rights, law, and legal traditions, with traditional ways of decision-making serving as the first laws of this land, managing all aspects of life such as food, protection, education, and medicine (ibid). Inherent rights flow from this, as they argue, include the right to self-determination and as a result, treaties between Indigenous Nations and Crown and/or Canada are constitutionally protected documents and legally binding (ibid). As professional planners, the Indigenous Planning Perspectives Task Force

argue that regardless of these feats, conventional planning persists within Indigenous communities and territories, even though many First Nations have their own land use plans for those lands, effectively thereby disenfranchising the Indigenous lens from the planning process (ibid).

Indigenous planning is defined, according to the task force, as including various features. Critical factors when making a planning decision may be articulated through the “people–place–knowledge–values loop” which defines Indigenous planning as: “Indigenous people making decisions about their place (whether in the built or natural environment) using their knowledge, values and principles to define and progress their present and future social, cultural, environmental and economic aspirations” (ibid). Indigenous planning is thus ‘Indigenous peoples spatialising their aspirations, their identity, and their indigeneity’ (ibid). I argue it is crucial to include Indigenous planning perspectives as the challenge for academics has been to fashion tools for the purpose of decolonizing. Indigenous tools can also support revitalising attention to Indigenous knowledge. To quote Indigenous scholar Linda T Smith, “the master’s tools of colonisation will not work to decolonize what the master built” (p. 22 Decolonizing methodologies)

Although there are several valid reasons to implement more critical forms of planning, traditional development plans continue to place extraction as a key point in respect to the municipality of Wood Buffalo. For example, during the height of the oil sands boom, the Municipal Development Plan (2011) referred to oil industry production “as the engine for growth in the region”, stating oil sands operations produced 1.6 million barrels of oil equivalents per day with future projects for the next 20 years could approach 6.9 million bpd (reaching a total of 7.5 million bpd in production capacity) (ibid, pp. 23, 37-38). The Municipal Development Plan for Wood Buffalo also claims to be not only a regional plan, an urban plan, or a rural plan, but rather all three - with the province arguing that it reflects the complexity of

planning in one of Canada's largest municipalities by area (ibid, p. 2). The Municipal Development Plan is used to "guide both short and long-term decision making at the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (the Municipality)", addressing issues at the urban scale, the distinct rural communities, and vast tracts of hinterland (ibid, p. 23). It also cites responsible and sustainable growth as a top priority for the Regional Municipality but, I argue, growth and development is here narrowly defined to the framework of extraction and capital, rather than an approach which honours Indigenous processes and Indigenous knowledge. This is largely the case because extraction itself assumes capital as witnessed in the DRC and the Development Plan proposes a continuous expansion of oil sands production which requires capital investment. This includes both surface mining and in situ (in place) extraction for deeper deposits with surface mining operations accounting for approximately 80 percent of current production while Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage (SAGD) operations, a form of in situ extraction, account for the remaining 20 percent (ibid). Little has changed in the Municipal Development Plan of 2022 with economic growth and innovation remaining prioritized over Indigenous land value and indigeneity in general. Though sustainability and responsible development are mentioned as priorities throughout the two master planning documents, what must be imperatively understood is that extraction is at the core of planning in this Municipality. Mentions of responsible development, green development and other climate ecosystem related development plans contradict the outcomes of conventional planning strategies which have devastated Indigenous people and wildlife since 2011.

Such approaches are also found in concepts of identity and ownership as Indigenous people being historically excluded from formal ownership and development. Haluza-DeLay (2011) for example has argued that industry leaders and advocacy groups like the Alberta Enterprise Group (AEG) have promoted the idea that utilising Alberta's natural gas and oil is an act of 'common sense and 'necessity' as it presents Canada with an opportunity to provide social goods such as health care and education as well as public infrastructure such as energy (ibid,

pg. 3). Haluza-DeLay further argues that crucial to understanding the politics of the oil sands is the fabrication and promotion of a new provincial identity (ibid). Organisations like the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) have used recent campaign efforts (e.g. *'Alberta is Energy'*) to promote the idea that the development of oil sands is imperative to facilitating an Albertan identity (ibid). AEG's vice-president of communications in fact stated that "advocating for the oil sands isn't just about preserving the resource's commercial value. It speaks to who Albertans are as a people" (Yaffe: 2008. Haluza-DeLay: 2011). I argue that this stands as an example of Canadian colonial hegemony presiding over planning practice. Decolonial studies here serve to destabilise such structures of power through not only challenging priorities for built space, but also the narratives behind them. A failure to recognize these exclusions reproduces this consent seeking behaviour within the planning praxis, which this paper describes as hegemonic. It is furthermore necessary to recognize planning as colonial as its roots on this land (Canada) can be retraced to initially dispossessed Indigenous land, genocide, and 'conquest'. As a result, particular planning praxis such as Indigenous Planning theory is typically sidelined from mainstream and conventional planning, and especially from the extraction and development processes enabled on Turtle Island.

## Conclusions

The primary goal of this research has been to provide a better understanding of post-colonial planning with the intent of deconstructing such constructs both in ideology and in praxis. I believe it is imperative to incorporate a decolonizing lens within planning as planning is implicated in colonialism through both its body of knowledge and within its land management practices (Dorries & Harjo, 2020, p. 215). As Libby Porter explains, a decolonizing lens places planning within a historical context, and this is important because it requires us to accept the very objectives, values, processes which constitute state-based planning are themselves rooted in colonial domination (Porter, 2006, p. 394). Secondly, failing to theorise planning's origins

reduces it to an acultural practice and field of study, thus continuing the legacy of colonial hierarchies (ibid, p. 393). Furthermore, if urbanisation continues to be a primary mechanism which enables both the spatial and economic dispossession of colonised peoples then re-urbanization can be a means to not only return forms of economic dispossession, but also decolonize from appropriated land. This strategy is in of itself a necessary step away from capital venture development as well, as it provides the opportunity for the application of radical planning strategies to enfranchise marginalised people and their respective communities.

In conclusion, both the DRC and RMWB experience external forces and issues with Global North (Canadian) ownership and exploitation of local resources. They experience Global North imperialism, however in different ways - hegemonic consent-seeking can be found in Alberta, whereas hegemonic imperialism can be found in Canada's role in promoting mining and development policy reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa. For the RMWB, my research proposes an end to extraction rather than a continuation let alone an expansion to the extractive activities. It argues that the land must be returned to its original owners so they may continue to plan for territorial use based upon their values; the idea that the environment can be compromised for energy development is ultimately incompatible with key principles of Indigenous stewardship. The environment cannot be separated from Indigenous groups in the way Canada has traditionally separated the environment and economic progress (i.e. exploiting one to expand the other). My research further argues that state sanctioned exclusion is clearly at play in the RMWB in what I refer to as mineral disenfranchisement. This approach to planning - privileging hegemonic features of the capitalist economy - assumes the structure of colonial extraction and legitimates it at the expense of Indigeneity territoriality and stewardship. The people most at risk of health effects from industrial processes in the tar sands are those who eat food from the land and water; these are the Dene, Cree and Métis communities who continue to subsist on a diet of fish and wild game. The remote Fort Chipewyan community, for example, has an eighty-per-cent subsistence diet and points to the tar-sands mining as the principal

cause of both the toxins in the water and the dramatic increases in the number of cancers and other diseases.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, to the west of Wood Buffalo rests the Wood Buffalo National Park, or Canada's largest and the world's second largest national park and exists on the list of the world's endangered World Heritage sites (Vannini, P., & Vannini, A. (2019). In the context of Alberta, however, this extractivist regime has been exhausting the wilderness of the park and heritage site, decimating wildlife, and severing the sacred relations among Indigenous people, their ways of life, and their land (Smol, et al, 2013).

This affects indigenous dietary traditional livelihoods which sustain off the land. This expansion is a direct violation of (Treaty 8 and thus a violation of their protected rights as First Nations people (Moe, K. 2012). According to the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta (T8FNA) some of the basic principles to Treaty 8 include both the right to 'Health' and 'Livelihood' – both of which are being infringed upon (Elder Willer, F. Kasoney, A. 2013).<sup>14</sup> The right to 'Livelihood' includes the right to hunt and fish within the outlined territories of the treaty – further inspection of the actual Treaty 8 will reveal that there have indeed been measures made to ensure that Aboriginal peoples may hunt and fish willingly within their respective lands.<sup>15</sup>

Turning to the DRC, for South Kivu, it is important to note how current planning proposals are affected by extraction and mineral urbanisation. Though such extensions to the City of Bukavu address immediate urban planning needs, these do not address the root cause of the expansion itself which I argue is Global North, imperial led extraction and mineral urbanisation. Furthermore, though such plans address population overgrowth, they do not address urban

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<sup>13</sup>*Tar Sands: Environmental justice, treaty rights and Indigenous peoples.*

(n.d.-b). <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/tar-sands-environmental-justice-treaty-rights-and-indigenous-peoples>

<sup>14</sup> Elder Willer, F. Kasoney, A (2013) "Treaty Principles"

<sup>15</sup> Duhamel R. 1966 "Treaty No. 8 Made June 21, 1899 and Adhesions, Reports, ETC."

instability due to mineral-led growth. Here it is imperative to apply a radical planning lens as radical planning identifies mineral urbanisation as Western driven expansion within the host states of the Global South. I argue that a major strength of radical planning is to contextualise these political forces as deeply historical and oftentimes intrinsic to the planning process. My paper thus echoes the recommendations made by the scholars that such cities should preferably be "sustainable" and "green" in their design (Muhaya, et al. 2022; Valéry, M., et al . 2022) In addition, I propose an 'in-situ' re-agrarianisation plan as a counter-planning strategy to Western influence in Sub-Saharan African urbanisation in addition to the current relocation process. In-situ here refers to a process of re-agrarianising at the new proposed satellite cities that will be developed. In the same way, urbanisation can be seen as the gathering of people and market activities due to a number of influences (particularly mining), the emphasis here would be to gather around economic activities other than mining (ibid). *In situ* urbanisation has furthermore gained prominence for its potential to transform rural areas into urban hubs without the massive migration often associated with traditional urbanisation and as my paper has attempted to demonstrate, mineralized urbanisation (Roberta Fortugno, 2023)<sup>16</sup>. According to Fortugno, it deviates from traditional models where rural surplus labour and farming populations migrate to cities, emphasising instead the coexistence of farm and nonfarm activities within predominantly rural landscapes (ibid).

This is a step away from artisanal mining which (ASM) as Sadia Mohammed Banchirigah and Gavin Hilson (2010) write, has served as "one of the more popular destinations for poor farmers is the low-tech ASM sector. Due to its low barriers to entry, ASM has absorbed millions of rural Africans over the past two decades" (ibid). As Iva Pesa (2020) notes, rural peasants in the Central African Copperbelt were transformed into an urban working class

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<sup>16</sup> Occamobservatory. (2023, December 13). In situ Urbanization: a blueprint for inclusive and Sustainable transformation. OCCAM. <https://www.occam.org/post/in-situ-urbanization-a-blueprint-for-inclusive-and-sustainable-transformation#:~:text=In%20situ%20urbanization%20deviates%20from,activities%20within%20predominantly%20rural%20landscapes..>

dependent on mining with many interpreting urban agriculture as ‘out of place’, or even ‘indicative of failure in the urban development process’ (ibid, p. 530). Morally constricting values between rural tradition and urban modernity shaped perceptions of urban agriculture in the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelt for many decades (ibid). For example, debates on urban stabilisation, asserted that, over time, mine workers would form a ‘settled, permanent urban class of Africans who would rapidly lose their rural and traditional attachments’ (ibid).

As a radical planning alternative, in situ urbanisation addresses rural exodus needs, de-emphasizing Western driven growth as it results in informal urban growth (ibid, pg 10).<sup>17</sup> The focus of this development ought to be reducing poverty linkages in urban economies as well as reducing the gaps experienced between rural and urban spaces. As an academic and a planner, I argue this form of informal urbanisation which dispossesses people must be understood as an outcome of capitalist extraction and western driven expansion. Mining furthermore has largely failed to serve as an opportunity to reduce poverty and has furthermore been associated with rising violence . The latter is a consequence of the stark economic variations in wealth and poverty, which has taken racial and sometimes ethnic patterns, as well as creating wealth disparities and tensions between rural agricultural and mining communities in various instances (for example, Bryceson et al. 2011). In addition, although my research is in support of enfranchising community-driven artisanal mining, ASM and mining in general have been linked to Western driven demand for informal development and regulations and as a result has created a cycle of violence as well as mining dependent urbanisation.<sup>18</sup> All of these, my paper argues, simply reproduce and extend colonial era relationships (Angélique, N. C., et al 2022).

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<sup>17</sup> *UN/DESA Policy Brief #104: In situ urbanization key to leaving no one behind* | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-104-in-situ-urbanization-key-to-leaving-no-one-behind/>

<sup>18</sup> *The DRC Mining Industry: Child labor and Formalization of Small-Scale Mining*. (n.d.). Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/drc-mining-industry-child-labor-and-formalization-small-scale-mining>

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