

## SPATIAL IMAGERY IN EXTRACTIVE CAPITALISM: FORM AND STRENGTH IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DIAGRAMS

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### Abstract

*In the contemporary capitalism of flows, companies that strongly depend on territorial resources adopt social private policies so as to ensure the spatial insertion of their projects. In order to preserve their reputation, they also take part in a dispute for the legitimate representation of social space through the growing use of the visual instrument of diagrams. From among the corporate uses of diagrams, two types will be discussed herein. Whereas “corporate social responsibility” diagrams presuppose a harmonic space of partnership and cooperation, social risk mapping reveals the presence of dissensus and threats to the business climate. The text makes a critical reading of the business management literature and the diagrammatic material that composes it, and discusses diagrams published in the sustainability and corporate social responsibility reports of large corporations in the mineral extractive sector.*

### Keywords

*Diagrams; Corporate Social Responsibility; Risk Mapping; Capitalism of Flows; Extractive Industry.*

## IMAGÉTICA ESPACIAL NO CAPITALISMO EXTRATIVO: FORMA E FORÇA NOS DIAGRAMAS DE RESPONSABILIDADE SOCIAL EMPRESARIAL

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### Resumo

*No capitalismo contemporâneo de fluxos, as corporações cujos negócios dependem de recursos do território recorrem crescentemente a políticas sociais privadas visando favorecer a inserção territorial de seus projetos. Com o propósito de assegurar sua reputação, participam de uma disputa pela representação do espaço social mediante o uso crescente do instrumento visual dos diagramas. Entre os usos empresariais de diagramas, dois são aqui discutidos. Enquanto os diagramas de “responsabilidade social empresarial” pressupõem um espaço harmônico de parceria e cooperação, os mapeamentos ditos “de risco”, para uso interno das empresas, mostram a presença do dissenso e de ameaças ao rumo dos negócios. O texto faz uma leitura crítica da literatura do management empresarial e do material diagramático que a compõe e discute diagramas publicados em relatórios de sustentabilidade e responsabilidade social empresarial de grandes corporações do setor extrativo mineral.*

### Palavras-chave

*Diagramas; Responsabilidade Social Empresarial; Mapeamento de Riscos; Capitalismo de Fluxos; Indústria Extrativa.*

# SPATIAL IMAGERY IN EXTRACTIVE CAPITALISM: FORM AND STRENGTH IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DIAGRAMS

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Spatial imagery is one of the most effective instruments for reducing the complexity of the world – through the concealment of almost everything that refers to the lived experiences and constructive practices of mutant and protean spatialities - and, also, a spectacular vehicle of programmed mythologies, spatial ideologies and policies (LUSSAULT, 2007, p. 80).<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In contemporary management literature, reputation is considered a strategic asset, seen as a source of value creation and of competitive advantages. For the financial community, having a good reputation with society and market agents is now part of the capital of companies. The relationship of interdependence typical of a globalized world has exposed them to fresh, greater environmental, social and labor risks. Criticism from society places corporations into situations referred to as “social risk”, configured when their practices are publicly questioned, and their public image becomes shaken. The decision to employ workers in less industrialized countries without respecting the labor standards that prevail in more industrialized economies, for example, is currently seen by business consulting as the cause of undesirable results, such as public criticism of their production chain (KYTLE; RUGGIE, 2005). This same rationale would explain the fact that, as of mid-2020, in the face of international pressure on the disastrous environmental policies of the Brazilian government, elected in 2018, part of Brazil’s commodity-exporting agribusiness began to display concern over the loss of markets and over defending what they understand to be their “reputation capital”.

Management theorists define “reputation” as an intangible business asset resulting from society’s perception of the commitment of companies to comply with

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1. This and all non-English citations hereafter have been translated by the authors.

laws and regulations, and, more generally, of the reliability of corporate practices (BOISTEL, 2014). From behind this reputation, corporations see the volume of their sales and the possibility of ensuring long-term profits, avoiding losses derived from events that may compromise their image. This, in turn, is seen as being dependent on respecting not only the set of legal rules that arise from positive law, but also on rules adopted with no legal obligation, relating to quality certificates or actions of so-called “corporate social responsibility”. In cases of non-compliance with these rules, the company may be accused of failing to fulfill its obligations. The permanent exposure of corporations to legal and political risks arising from society’s criticism of their practices has led them to adopt a preventive management approach against threats to their reputation, a concern particularly present among those whose activities depend heavily on their “territorial anchoring”, as is the case of companies in the extractive sector.

The so-called “risk mappings” are a platform for internal communication between companies and employees in order to help them become aware of any behavior that may justify complaints against the company. Business consultants maintain that, from the perspective of managing such criticisms, “corporate social responsibility” programs are an instrument that, through contact with the communities surrounding their facilities, provide information, awareness, and insights regarding the “social risks”, while simultaneously constituting an effective means of responding to them (KYTLE; RUGGIE, 2005, p. 10). For these consultants, social programs implemented by companies, whether for income generation or related to education or health, when they are presented as being capable of providing better living conditions for communities, could reduce the probability of new threats to their businesses. Anticipating the aforementioned “social risks” has become fundamental for the survival of companies, since “knowing the variables that may influence the return on investments is essential in order to reduce surprises, and to anticipate or simulate either defensive or aggressive behaviors” (BRAGA; BRUNI; MONTEIRO, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, the credibility of the so-called social responsibility policies depends on significant communication efforts (CARDEBAT; CASSAGNART, 2011, p. 76).

The instruments of business communication not only constitute discourses on the companies themselves, with the intention of forging a good reputation toward society in general and the populations from territorial areas of immediate interest to the corporations, but also on the social space in which they act strategically, as is the case of social risk mappings. These instruments are inscribed within a set of spatial representational forms and diagrams through which corporations sometimes either disseminate the beneficent manner in which they hope to be

seen, or sometimes to forge strategic readings specific to the social field in which they operate. By carrying a kind of ideological geometry, when made public, such business diagrams make part of the disputes over the legitimate description of the space of relationships into which both the company and the agents it believes have the ability to affect its interests are inscribed. The use of diagrammatic visual representation is a heuristic instrument with which corporations hope to be able to favor, through image, the legitimacy of their practices and thus guide their actions.

Based on a critical reading of the management literature, the intention of this article is to discuss the “geometry” of the representation of social space contained within the diagrammatic visual strategies of extractive capitalism companies. In order to do so, a brief historical review of business strategies for the construction of consent in extramural spaces will be presented, in which the discourse of corporate social responsibility is inscribed. This is followed by a discussion on the role of diagrammatic visual representation in disseminating a mythological, non-confrontational representation of social space, in contrast to the instrumental representation of the conflictual territory that companies intend to control.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Disciplinary political division of labor – social order in non-directly productive spaces

Throughout the history of capitalism, a kind of social disciplinary political division of labor has prevailed. Since its beginnings, value was given to the authority of capital inside the factories and of the State in the external areas of factory spaces. During the early organizational stages of large-scale industry, a combination was formed of a strict discipline of labor inside the factory and, outside, a private paternalism that sought to frame the daily life of workers through philanthropy, with the provision of day care centers, school vacation camps, etc.

In the 1990s, there were signs of change in this social disciplinary division of labor. Since then, business practices for managing territories have emerged and become disseminated, and discussions began regarding the need for a “territorial anchoring of businesses” located outside the strict perimeters of privately owned productive units. Companies involved in economic activities that are heavily dependent on the territory invested in the socio-political stabilization of the “surroundings” of their productive establishments, and managerial theories were dedicated to incorporating the extra-market relations of companies with society in

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2. The present study is anchored in the analysis of diagrams published in the sustainability and corporate social responsibility reports of large corporations in the mineral extractive sector, and which was published between 2015 and 2020. We have also included the analysis of diagrams used by business consultancies and by authors of management literature.

the economic calculation of investment efficiency. In the words of consultants in the area, “if organizations want to be effective, they will pay attention to all and only those relationships that can affect or be affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (FREEMAN, 1999, p. 234). Such groups would be those that have some power “to attract media attention”, or “to exert coercive power over the course of business”. The discourses on the business management of the “social” are thus inscribed in the continuity and historical distinctiveness of the different capitalist modes for the construction of consent, aiming, most notably, at avoiding ruptures in the flows of commodities and money.<sup>3</sup>

In his critical response to Proudhon, Marx had already indicated that a correlation existed between the political organizational forms of society and authority for the social distribution of the efforts of labor among activities: “Thus authority in the workshop and authority in society, in relation to the division of labor, are in inverse ratio to each other”<sup>4</sup> (MARX, 1972, p. 143).<sup>5</sup> In this “general rule” inferred by Marx, the presence may be perceived of a division of labor of another nature – a social disciplinary political division of labor. This type of division was characterized, throughout the early stages of industrialization, by the increasing transfer of disciplinary authority from the State to capital, with the former basically setting the most general legal conditions for regulating wage relations. In the capitalism of the late twentieth century, we witnessed a new configuration of this disciplinary political division of labor. In certain sectors of activity, the business authority, in line with the changes that had taken place in the role of the

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3. As Pierre Veltz points out, in his characterization of the material forms of post-Fordist capitalism, “the core of the new strategies for the rationalization of industry lies in the search for coordination-integration on a global scale of the ‘system of production’ and in the emergence of a logistic transversal function” (VELTZ, 1988, p. 33). It would then be up to business management to connect, in networks, production flows and sequences in structuring logistical schemes: “In the technical sense, these are logistical nodes; in the economic sense, the possibility of creating and reconfiguring the heterogeneous activity chains with ease and speed; in the sociological and more metaphorical sense, the ability to create networks crossing cultures and multiple references” (VELTZ, 2005, p. 215-216). VELTZ, P. Rationalisation, organisation et modèles d’organisation dans l’industrie, orientations de recherche. In: COHENDET, P.; HOLLAED, M.; MALSCH, T.; VELTZ, P. *L’Après-taylorisme – nouvelles formes de rationalisation dans l’entreprise en France et en Allemagne*. Paris: Economica, 1988. p. 33-46; and VELTZ, P. *Mondialisation, ville et territoires*. Paris, PUF, 2005.

4. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of MARX, K. *Capital*. Penguin Books London, Great Britain, 1976, p. 477.

5. “It can even be laid down as a general rule that the less authority presides over the division of labour inside society, the more the division of labour develops inside the workshop, and the more it is subjected there to the authority of a single person. Thus authority in the workshop and authority in society, in relation to the division of labour, are in inverse ratio to each other”. MARX, K. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Online edition: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Poverty-Philosophy.pdf>, 1955. p. 61.

State following the liberal reforms of the 1990s, began to develop its own strategies for stabilizing the social lands occupied by groups that, although not working in the company, are seen as being capable of affecting and being affected by local business activities.

The accumulation of previous experiences with technologies to control and discipline workers inside the factories has definitely influenced, with adaptations, the control strategies that companies today intend to exercise outside their facilities. Throughout what Gaudemar (1982) called the “disciplinary cycle”, different control strategies, inside the production units, followed one after the other: panopticism and paternalism combined in an industrial economy that aimed to impose silence and respect for order onto the worker. Technologies for disciplining workers outside the factories were adopted through indirect strategies of social moralization. In the company towns, the boss-patriarch, like a good father of a family, administrated the life of the workers – treated as immature youths – also outside the workplace. Alongside the forms of panoptic surveillance and moralizing paternalism, a form of discipline with objective bases was sought, as in the perspective of industrial engineering, in which every technical system was conceived with a view to obtaining a controllable and measurable effect, the techniques of controlling workers followed the model of machine control techniques. The productive process, in this case, was thought of as a logical mathematical series from which random events could be excluded. A political and moral arithmetic began to guide the government of factories. The discipline objectified by the machine and the chronometer was the industrial form assumed by moral arithmetic conceived, in the nineteenth century, by Bentham’s utilitarian thinking, making automacy a form of autocracy (GAUDEMAR, 1982, p. 51-52).

In the new post-Fordist industrial systems, productive spaces tended to be treated as spaces of mobility and fluidity. In the case of the so-called continuous processes (characterized by flows of materials such as those from the extractive industry), the industrial site is constituted not only by a location, but similarly by a network of units/processes, although arranged in extensive and connected areas, through which their products circulate, travelling from mines to ports by railroads or pipelines. These “sites-network” involve, in a very particular manner, the ways of life of the surrounding populations, extensively involving living spaces related to housing, schools, leisure, etc., since the “strategy of productive and extensive investment in space is also an investment strategy in social space” (GAUDEMAR, 1980, p. 40).

With the spatial reorganization typical of contemporary flexible capitalism, the “site-network” form was incorporated into the economy as a whole; business profitability depends on the functionality of the network: the spatial strategy of productive investment is also a strategy of investment in “non-directly productive” space. It is toward these spaces, occupied by subjects that, although not subordinate to any contractual relationship with the companies, may be viewed as being capable of posing a risk to the stability of the business, that corporate communication strategies are thought out. These make part of the diagrams that are discussed below, which, on the one hand, aim to prevent “social risks”, and, on the other hand, to disseminate harmonious representations of the relationships between companies and the social groups affected by their projects.

## 2. Social space and diagrams

The diagram is a simplified, structured visual representation of selected components of things and phenomena. This form of representation is often used to highlight relationships between the parts of a set. They are, in general, abstract linear figures that are used to represent the forms that are considered to be essential in an object or phenomenon, in order to facilitate a demonstration or to make certain facts sensitive. In the scientific field, a diagram may intervene as an instrument for validating the course of an argument (DONDERO, 2011, p. 1).

In Peirce’s semiotics, the diagram appears as a subcategory of the icon whose function is not to resemble its object, but rather to express its relative properties through an analog device that naturally induces a selection and a certain abstraction. As a relational icon (MEIER, 2007), it contains implicit information that, in order to appear, needs to be made explicit through some observational process of non-evident relationships. It is thought out, therefore, in view of its ability to make understandings converge towards an explanation (STJERNFELT, 2000, p. 360). The ability to reason and produce intelligibility based on experiences is a visual imaginative process and the diagram is configured as a means of expressing abstract relationships between the premises from which a hypothesis may emerge (NUBIOLA; BARRENA, 2012).

The pertinence of the diagrammatic mode of representation is justified by the fact that “the nature and habits of our spirit make us feel it immediately, without having to make the effort to remember any rule of our habitual modes of expression” (VERHAEGEN, 1994, p. 28). This would be the attribute capable of explaining the diversity of social uses of diagrams that we see transiting between different domains, namely, spatial relationships that are graphically arranged on a plane that may be applied both to the teaching of logic and to representations



of social space. The discourse of corporate social responsibility, currently accompanied by a profusion of diagrammatic representations, is a contemporary example of the so-called epideictic rhetoric, a genre of eloquence that does not lend itself to controversy and intends to make the present coherent (NICOLAS, 2009). The usual visual text containing intersecting circles, for example, is a typical linguistic instrument for presenting business entities as being harmoniously intertwined with the relevant spheres of social life (Figure 1). In place of the concentric circles by which companies used to represent themselves as occupying the center and placing the other instances of society on the periphery, the diagrams of post-Fordist capitalism seek to show intertwined circles-domains – filled with the terms “social, economic and environment”, or “planet, prosperity, people”. The elements of the social world are thus recorded and represented in a stylized manner, with simplified, childish traits, resulting from pedagogical collages of geometric figures that intend to exalt the “transparency” of the company’s activities (CATELLANI, 2011). With the figures thus arranged, companies seek to offer a reading of a space made of bonds and connections between social actors and companies. The intention of the rhetorical device is to make the visual perceptual act precede the cognitive act as a result of a strong association between visual order and truth regime; that knowledge comes from seeing (ZARNOVEANU, 2012, p. 3).

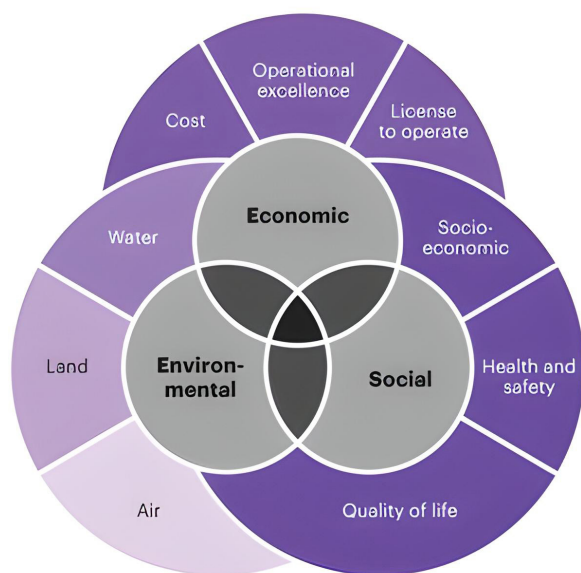


Figure 1. Dimensions of sustainability from the perspective of the mining industry.

Source: <https://www.de.kearney.com/social-impact/article/?a/mining-takes-on-the-sustainability-challenge>. Viewed on: March 14, 2021.

The pyramid-shaped diagrams, in turn, have the intention of suggesting the metaphor of superimposing different layers of “responsibility” – economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (Figure 2). Philanthropic responsibility is currently placed at the top of the pyramid, with profit at its base, although some consultants intend to place philanthropic responsibility at a second level, immediately supported by the foundation of profitability (VISSER, 2007). In the controversy over the arrangement of layers, it may be perceived, within the idea of relative importance, that it is concerned with the amount of resources, which the corporation intends to spend on behalf of its respective “responsibilities” or, as some consultants recognize, “responses” (CARROLL, 1979).



Figure 2. Carroll's pyramid of social responsibility (1991)

Source: Carroll (1991) apud Dulkiah et al. (2019).

Time – similarly epideictic and uncontroversial – is presented by arrows that indicate an evolution of the different “responsibilities” over time: economic in the 1960s and socio-environmental from the 2000s onwards. Fishbone timelines – cause and effect diagrams –, in turn, are intended to represent the arrival of discursive innovations expressed in the arrows that feed the evolutionary central line that leads to the notion of “corporate social responsibility”. For a moral management of “stakeholders” – namely, those who, vis-à-vis companies, “claim for legal and ethical rights”, attention should move “from social responsibility to social responsiveness” (FREDERICK, 1994, p. 150). The character intended to appease “corporate social responsibility” is exposed in a revealing and caricatured manner in diagrams

in which the social actions of companies take the form of a cloud from which raindrops fall on burning spaces; or when threatening “emerging stakeholders” are represented as bombs about to explode (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Strategic business diagram with explicit potential conflict

Legend: (Clockwise) Emerging!!! – Community – Governments and international organizations – NGOs and militant groups – Clients – Providers – Internal public – Environment – (Central circle) Stakeholders, Interest groups, Counterparts and interested parties: individuals and companies, and physical environments that may impact or be impacted by the activities of the company.

Source: Viquez (2013).

In the diagrammatic representations of the mineral extractive industry, the figure of the stakeholder, the interested party, gains visibility. This is the name that business consultants give to social actors that establish relationships with the activities of companies, including those in which such relationships are of spatial proximity to industrial facilities and from which companies intend “to win public hearts and minds” (MOUNTFORD, 2022, p. 2). These are the social groups that corporations fear could disrupt the operation of the mining facilities, which could lead to a drop of up to 20 billion dollars for each week of delay in production at globally important mines, according to estimates in the report on Conflict and Mining from the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) (ROSSOUW, 2016). The notion of stakeholder, discussed below, plays a central role in the representation of a harmonious social space that corporations seek to disseminate through their diagrams. As will be seen, the discourse that conceives stakeholders as “partners” of business projects does not in any way correspond to

the conflicting topology in which the agents so designated are usually situated and represented. This dimension will become evident in the subsequent section, when the diagrammatic figurations of the so-called social risk maps are explored.

### 3. A “capitalism of stakeholders”

In the business literature, certain authors have taken on the task of creating a vocabulary aimed at providing companies with a moral image that “widens their horizons and transcends the limits of previous conceptions” (WICKS; GUILBERT; FREEMAN, 1994, p. 256-257). The stakeholder category is the result of this effort to rhetorically redefine the meaning of business practices. Freeman (1984, p. 46) calls a stakeholder “any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization’s objectives”. Indications about the specific nature of the aforementioned affects or about the means by which they produce effects or affects remain vague. We know that for Spinoza, a philosopher from whom Freeman, a business consultant who presents himself as a Philosophy graduate, borrowed certain notions, affection is the manner in which “The human body can be affected in many ways, whereby its power of activity is increased or diminished” (SPINOZA, 2008, p. 163).<sup>6</sup>

According to Freeman, the word stakeholder first appeared in an internal memorandum at the Stanford Research Institute, in 1963, to qualify “groups without the support of which the organization would cease to exist” (FREEMAN, 1984, p. 31). From then on, the question arose regarding the “management” of actors on whose “support” the existence of the company depended. In Freeman’s terms, “all of these ideas have to come together at the center of what capitalism is” (FREEMAN, 2013, [n.p]). The need for this support comes from “persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests” (CLARKSON, 1995, p. 106) with companies because they are affected by business practices. The most specific business expressions for the potential action of the holders of rights point to the understanding that to affect means to threaten (YANG et al., 2009) or to offer risks (FONSECA et al., 2017); protests and boycotts are mentioned (KELLY, 2005), actions that can configure “turbulent scenarios”<sup>7</sup> characterized by demands and criticisms from local communities

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6. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of SPINOZA, B. de. *The Ethics*. ebook edition: <https://www.globalgreybooks.com/ethics-spinoza-ebook.html>. (2021, p. 53). Viewed on: August 6, 2022.

7. Among the events that may constitute such scenarios, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997, p. 877) cite “wildcat strikes, employee sabotage, and terrorism” as well as “coercive tactics include environmentalists spiking trees in areas to be logged and religious or political terrorists using bombings, shootings, or kidnappings to call attention to their claims”.

(BRAGA; BRUNI; MONTEIRO, 2007); or, even, practices that generate a tense climate that may harm the licensing and certification processes (LÔBO, 2007).

The construction of the stakeholder category is, therefore, part of a discursive strategy that seeks to dilute the real or potential conflicts faced by an organization in a continuum of cooperation and conflict.<sup>8</sup> This implies the pretense of assuming, for example, absurd as it may be, that the senior managers of a company may eventually constitute an opponent to the interests of the organization. On the other hand, it is assumed that social groups negatively affected by the company, such as those compulsorily displaced by a business project, could stop criticizing such projects and become their dedicated supporters. The managerial discourse of stakeholder management intends to juxtapose, in the same semantic field, agents that are explicitly critical of the business projects – such as groups of activists – and intrinsic allies of these projects – such as funding agencies. It is a matter of diluting the potential reached by business projects in the same field of relationships that companies establish with their partners, allies and collaborators, while opening up space to differentiate the subfield of critical actors. Anchored in a superposition of polygonal fields of “hazard classes”, companies will be able to strategically direct their focus on the so-called “dangerous stakeholders”, as well as on those endowed with legitimacy, although considered powerless (Figure 4).<sup>9</sup>

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8. As stated by Svampa (2008, p. 108), “the governance model is being applied today in Latin America as part of the extension of an extractive-export model”. The conception that underlies this model is that, “beyond the opacity of representation systems and new uncertainties, antagonisms and contradictions can be resolved in a sphere of mediation and reciprocal understandings, in which the objective is both the consolidation and the of governability as the materialization of the so-called ‘social capital’ in terms of social and political networks”. SVAMPA, M. *Change of time – social movements and political power*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno; Clacso Coeditions, 2008.

9. Os atores sociais que, segundo o diagrama-modelo de Mitchell, Agle e Wood (1997, p. 877), são ditos “perigosos” mereceriam atenção porque “em razão de seu poder, eles podem ter um comportamento destrutivo quando, por exemplo, não são informados ou se sentem negligenciados”. <https://globescan.com/2013/05/16/mining-industry-faces-a-struggle-to-win-public-hearts-and-minds/>. VERWIJS, C.; OVEREEM, B. *Cartographie des Parties Prenantes*. Disponível em: [https://wikiagile.cesi.fr/index.php?title=Cartographie\\_des\\_Parties\\_Prenantes](https://wikiagile.cesi.fr/index.php?title=Cartographie_des_Parties_Prenantes). Viewed on: 10 jan. 2021. Consultores da indústria mineral fazem a ressalva de que os *stakeholders* dotados de legitimidade, embora desprovidos de poder ou não apresentando urgência de ação, deveriam ser identificados com a mesma diligência com que o são os stakeholders dotados de poder (EUROPEAN UNION, 2020, p. 16).

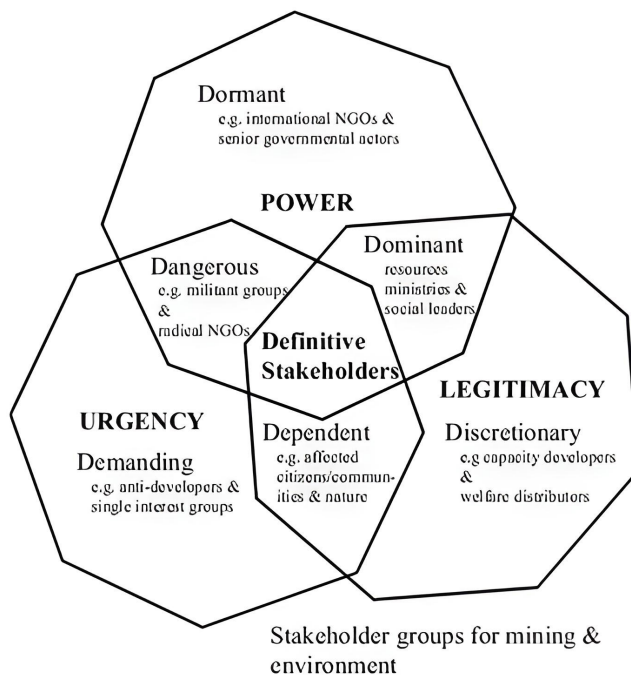


Figure 4. Typology of stakeholders used by consultants in the mining sector  
Source: Produced from Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997).

Through risk mappings, stakeholders are classified based on two criteria: their potential (i) to threaten or (ii) to cooperate with the organization (SAVAGE et al., 1991). Some stakeholders deserve special attention – for their power or legitimacy. Faced with a context considered “threatening”, corporations resort to a “strategic intelligence” (PINTO, 2019), or, in the case of the extractive industry, to what they call “raw material intelligence” (EUROPEAN UNION, 2020), through which people or groups of agents are placed on a diagram, distributed according to variables such as “power” and “interest in the project”, ability to affect the business project or to be affected by it. Individuals and groups that companies consider as having a “great interest” in the project and “great power” to act upon it should, according to management strategies, be “closely managed”. In the case of agents in cooperation with the company, such as financiers, managers and directors, “closely managing” would mean having a “conversation” with them, with a view to keeping them aligned with the needs of the project. In the case of critics of the project – alternatively designated as “blockers”, “destructive” or “dangerous”, simple “conversations” would not be enough: management, isolation and negotiation actions would be necessary.

There are consultants from the business world who even argue that mapping would not necessarily be a formal process applied to all stakeholders, since “there are stakeholders that are not closely managed and ultimately are not

widely monitored”, such as financial institutions (FONSECA et al., 2017, p. 11 and 13). In other words, although agents interested in cooperating with the company can be mapped, they will rarely be the target of “close management”. This is because the business efforts of this type of “close management” are aimed, with greater intensity and priority, at the critical agents of the projects than at those who cooperate with them. The non-contractual nature of the relationship between companies and activists, in turn, presupposes actions that cannot be reduced to the so-called “conversations” foreseen for agents involved in contractual relationships. As stated by a business manager responsible for the production of risk mappings, “if a surrounding community is about to halt an operation in the courts and cause enormous damage to the company, it is necessary to understand the scenario and establish commitments, goals and indicators that help to reduce the conflict” (PADEIRO, 2016).<sup>10</sup>

According to stakeholder mapping professionals, surveys of this type usually result from consultations with reports from the Consumer Service, the ombudsman, the communication sector and exploratory research (PADEIRO, 2016), in order to identify, together with the actors, the presence of “distinct expectations” or conflicting expectations regarding the business project, in order to seek to mitigate them (CARVALHO; RABECHINI JR., 2011).<sup>11</sup> There is, therefore, a relationship between the management of stakeholders and the management of the risks that they may offer to companies (FONSECA et al., 2017, p. 16). In these cases, unlike diagrams of corporate social responsibility designed to build a corporate reputation, diagrams that represent threats to investment projects resemble a “map of power relations”, which tends to be used for purposes strictly internal to corporations. (Figure 5).

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10. At a public hearing held in October 2013 at the Congressional Commission for Human Rights and Participatory Legislation, a former employee of a large mining company presented evidence that the company in question had kept a spy network on its employees, politicians and social movements. See COMISSÃO DE DIREITOS HUMANOS E LEGISLAÇÃO PARTICIPATIVA DA CÂMARA DE DEPUTADOS, 2013. Espionagem e infiltração da Vale S.A Available at: <http://www12.senado.gov.br/ecidania/visualizacaoaudiencia?id=841>. Viewed on: January 14, 2020. This former employee provided statements of payments made to a company that had been founded by a former member of the DOI-CODI, a well-known torture center that operated during the 1964-1985 Brazilian dictatorship. See OTÁVIO, C.; DUARTE, A. Agentes da ditadura criam rede de arapongas. *O Globo*, 25 abr. 2011; and AMARAL, M. Vazamento de informações expõe espionagem da Vale. *Publica Agencia de Reportagem e Jornalismo Investigativo*, 13 set. 2013. Available at: <http://www.apublica.org/2013/09/abrindo-caixa-preta-da-seguranca-da-vale/>. Viewed on: October 25, 2020

11. The perception is not devoid of purpose that this type of practice has become a consultancy service on route to expanding its offer to other fields of social life, such as governments (such as the survey of “detractors” commissioned by a Minister of Economy from the Bolsonaro government) (BOLLE, 2020) or by regulatory agencies, such as the National Mining Agency (OFICINA DA PALAVRA, 2020). BOLLE, M. Os detratores de Guedes. *Estado de S. Paulo*, 2 Dec. 2020. OFICINA DA PALAVRA. Agência Nacional de Mineração. *Mapeamento de influenciadores digitais*. Brasília, DF, nov./dez. 2020.

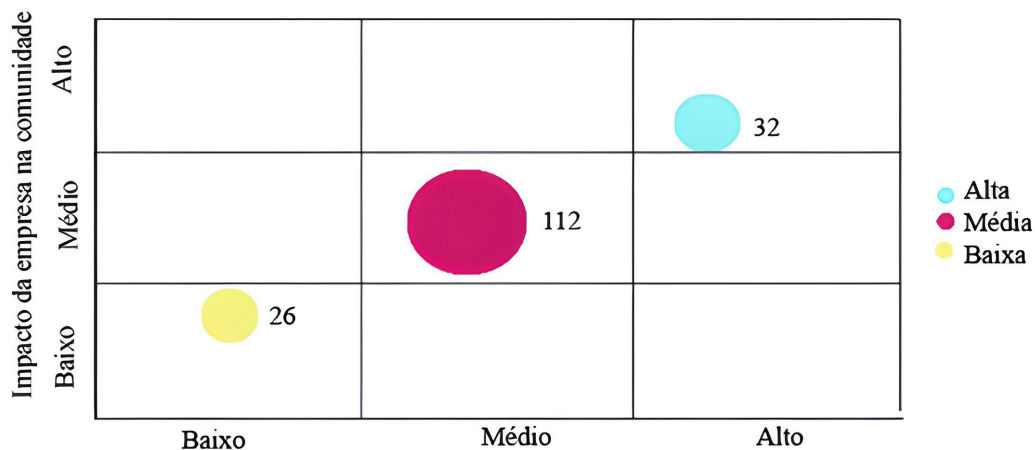


Figure 5. Social risk diagram of a large company

Legend: Vertical axis: Impact of the company on the community – Low – Medium – High; Horizontal axis: Impact of the community on the company – Low – Medium – High.

Source: Giffoni and Wanderley (2010).

The construction of social risk maps – applied to dangerous or legitimate stakeholders, in terms of the reference model by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) – constitutes, therefore, a topology of power relations. The graphic representation of the space of conflict is part of the process by which, when criticized, the agents of capitalism aim, to some extent, reconstitute the positive implication and the consent of society (BOLTANSKI; CHIAPELLO, 2009). In the case of business projects that are heavily dependent on territorial resources, the intention is, in particular, to “manage” the social groups with which corporations do not necessarily have contractual relationships, despite the fact that they hold the power or legitimacy to affect business.

This is achieved, therefore, by tensioning the conventional forms of justifying business practices, seeking, as in the words of the president of the World Economic Forum, to configure a so-called “stakeholder capitalism”.<sup>12</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello (2009) call this type of operation “displacement” – organizational or discursive change, carried out in terms of force or legitimacy, through which capitalism ensures continuity to its profit-making mechanisms. Such displacements result from the work of the collective elaboration of criticism conducted by think tanks, consultancies, management specialists and communicators, and may be seen as procedures for changing the social place/condition of critical confrontation, which allows for avoiding losses of relative superiority of the dominant actors and to

12. “The protection of nature will be part of the ‘Great Restarting’, including a new social contract and a shift from shareholder capitalism to stakeholder capitalism.” SCHWAB, K. Presented the report *The Future of Nature and Business*. Geneva: World Economic Forum, July 17. 2020.



attribute powers to them derived from new circumstances. They ultimately have, as in the cases discussed herein, the support of diagrammatic visuality strategies, to help anticipate and deflate criticism. Subtly shifting in relation to the moral postulates whose respect society seems to require, corporations aim to ensure that, under new discursive conditions, previously existing criticisms may be neutralized.

#### Final considerations

After the liberal reforms of the 1980s-1990s, new types of articulation between economics and politics were established. The power to invest became more present alongside the power to govern, both because of the capacity of capital to exert pressure on governments and because large corporations began to partially occupy the role of the State, selectively providing “public goods” in territories of interest for their projects. The international mobility of capital and the interlocal competition for attracting investments favored social and environmental deregulation, allowing local communities to be launched within what Stengers and Pignarre (2005) called “hellish alternatives”.

It happens that, in situations in which the threat of relocating a project cannot be exercised, when there is locational rigidity of the business, as is the case of the extractive industries, “corporate social responsibility” policies are activated. Through these, companies seek to make the rights to education and health come to be understood by the affected populations as a favor granted by corporations. The current ways of anticipating and neutralizing conflicts, with a view to guaranteeing the flow of business, are, on the one hand, surveillance, through the so-called “stakeholder mapping”, and, on the other hand, private social policies. The diagrams of corporate social responsibility form part of the field of dispute for the legitimate representation of the space of relationships, the control of which corporations intend to assume (BOURDIEU, 1989). It is about making people see, believe and recognize a social world with no dissent, in which the groups affected by business projects see themselves as partners, “interested parties” and “psychological co-owners” of these projects. Diagrams of this type are part of a strategy that seeks to exercise the power to present a legitimate description of the topology of the social space, to make explicit the relationship of the parts with both the whole and of the parts among them (BATT, 2004, p. 7). They do not intend to represent a pre-existing world, but rather to produce “a new type of reality, a new model of truth”<sup>13</sup> (DELEUZE, 1988, p. 45), exploring the cognitive productivity of visualization operations (DAHAN-GAIDA, 2017, p. 43).

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13. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of DELEUZE, G. *Foucault*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. Translated and edited by Sean Hand, 2006, p. 35.

The diagrammatic representation is thus intended to carry a set of beliefs that redescribe the world, translating a specific regime of truth in which “believing is located in seeing” (BALANDIER, 1987). The expected effect from this type of diagram is a “copy for which no original has ever existed” (JAMESON, 1996, p. 45),<sup>14</sup> a pseudo-event, an imagery spectacle, part of what Guy Debord (1967 [1997]) called the “culture of representation”. Rousseau and Montesquieu had already formulated the problem of social order in terms of a socio-political geometry: society would be the space structured by the relations between extension and volume, expansion and contraction, assuming an isomorphism between the geometries of space and the socio-political order (FERNANDES, 1993, p. 112). For D’Arcy Thompson, every form may “alike be described as due to the action of force” (1992, p. 16). In the laboratory of history, diagrams therefore express invented worlds that may reveal to us the direct relationship between social conflict and aesthetic form, complex battles developed through forms, images and imageries (MORETTI, 2008, p. 107; SAID, 1995, pp. 37-38).

While the business maps of social risks, devoted to the internal public of corporations, intend to capture and reveal the relations of forces in the social field, the diagrams of corporate social responsibility have the intention of asserting a representation of the social field that wishes to be emptied of the variable force. The notion of stakeholder integrates a classification proposal that dilutes the conflict and brings together disparate elements, such as customers, suppliers or communities in conflict with the company. In turn, the social risk mappings, used internally by corporations, indicate that a part of the said stakeholders – when claiming rights – are viewed with suspicion and monitored as “dangerous”. The diagrams of corporate social responsibility, for the purpose of building a good corporate reputation, are therefore not just a proposal for classifying the social space, but part of the dispute for a formal description of the space of relationships, in which the business corporation is inscribed together with the agents it deems might affect its interests. The way in which the company seeks to represent relationships in this space expresses strength, even with the aim of not being a manifestation of it and seeks to empty, in form, its ineluctable presence. Thus, the construction of the spatial representation desired by the company to defend its reputation involves presenting an image of the “façade” of the social space through which it seeks to dilute its critics in the neutral condition of a stakeholder. “Backstage”, however,

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14. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of JAMESON, F. *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1997, p. 23.

corporations operate with spatial representations that strategically classify their critics in a field of forces according to the degrees of ability to negatively affect business, in view of the objectives of their territorial control and discipline.

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