



Strategies for managing large-scale mining sector land use conflicts in the global south



Abdul–Wadood Moomen

Department of Spatial Sciences–Western Australian School of Mines (WASM), Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U 1987, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, land use conflicts between large-scale mining sector and local communities have increased in the global south. However, with proper planning, it is possible that both companies and local communities can co-exist in the landscape. Thus, this paper explores land use conflicts in an emerging mining region as a function of: (i) anticipated displacement and (ii) improper understanding of affected communities. Fieldwork and in-depth study was conducted at Ghana's emerging North-west gold province. Participatory mapping, and focus group discussions were used in this study. The study found¹ latent contestations against mineral exploration in the area. It further established baseline indicators of land use conflict risks in the area. The study also found that despite the looming large-scale mining sector activities in the area, there are no existing strategies for managing land use conflicts. Hence, the paper advances that robustly calculating and addressing a priori local concerns can enhance peaceful co-existence between the mining sector and local communities.

1. Introduction

Strict land use policies, land withdrawals, and continued depletion of mineral resources in the developed countries has instigated a redirection of the large-scale mining sector activities to mineral-rich global south countries. Further, the untapped geological endowment, continued promotion of foreign trade policies by southern governments, and the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), introduced by the World Bank in the early 1980 s to negotiate economic liberation of developing countries, have also contributed to the burgeoning trends of large-scale mining sector development in the global south (Hammond et al., 2007; Hilson, 2004; Tsuma, 2010). For example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU), through the African Mining Vision (AMV), suggest the development of a mining sector, where new opportunities exist for brokering the economic growth and development of Africa (Africa Mining Vision, 2009). While these new ideas have been advanced, in recent times, land use issues between the large-scale mining sector and local communities have increased in mineral-rich developing countries (global south) (Hodge, 2014). Examples of developing countries where these conflicts are ubiquitous and intensive include: Peru, Chile, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania, and Ghana (Bebbington et al., 2008; Hilson, 2002c).

Historically, in developing countries, conflicts over land were between clans in respect of land boundaries, or between communities in respect of available area for farming (Lentz, 2006; Peters, 2004). Land related conflicts were also heard between tribes over territories of jurisprudence and legacy (Kasanga and Kotey, 2001; Peters, 2002; Wehrmann, 2008). Sedogo (2002) explains that some of these land related conflicts were; over facts and over interests. Conflicts over facts are the relatively superficial disagreements behind a dispute; and conflicts over interests relate to the culture and values of opponents on land use objectives. Thus, interest laden conflicts have long term roots and may often be re-ignited by some minor short term interest expressions between opposing parties (Lentz, 2003). This type of conflict is mostly among tribal groups in Africa. However, conflicts over interests also exist in mining regions, where local communities have had bitter experiences from previous mining activities and may use this as a yardstick to measure all future activities (Thomson and Joyce, 1997). For example, in northern Peru, communities protested against the new Rio Blanco copper mine project owing to previous displacements of their coffee and fruit plantations, water pollution and land disconfiguration (America, 2009; Haselip and Romera, 2011). Surrounding villages in the West Kutai mining area in Indonesia perpetuated resistance against PT Kelian Equatorial Mining activities due to the incessant experiences of damage to farmlands, forests, flora

E-mail addresses: a.moomen@postgrad.curtin.edu.au, a.dewan@curtin.edu.au.

¹ Conflicts that are not easily identifiable due to their non-violent nature but, do accumulate and erupt into severe violent conflicts when not properly addressed. FAO, 2000. Conflict and Natural Resource Management.

and fauna by the mining sector in a nearby mine host village (Jenkins, 2004). Thus, communities without previous experiences with the mining sector displacement also resist the industry based on observations.

Making matters more complex, the destinations of most of these investments are often food insecure regions, raising concerns that fertile lands are being converted to digging (Aragón and Rud, 2015). For example, in the past decade Ghana, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana and Zambia, which are among the top mineral resource producing countries in Africa, have recorded undernourishment figures between 22% and 69% (Africa Mining Vision, 2009; FAO, 2010). These countries import about 30% of their food supplies from the global north countries such as USA, Australia and Turkey (Yaro and Teye, 2010). Sub-Saharan Africa for instance received about 73% of the world's food in 2002 (Yaro and Teye, 2010). Agriculture remains the main land use activity, mostly on subsistence basis in rural areas (FAO, 2010). For instance, the dominant agricultural activity in Ghana is food crop farming; using a reported 55.9% of the country's total land area (MoFA, 2012).

Meanwhile, trends in agriculture contribution to GDP has been on the decline in Ghana. Between 2005 and 2014, agricultural contribution to GDP has dropped from 30.4–22.7% (MoFA, 2012). The food crop sub-sector recorded –1.3% in 2007, 1% in 2012, and the north-western belt of the country records a consistent negative growth within the period (Chamberlin, 2015). Although agriculture employs over 90% of rural folks in the northern savannah regions, a further decline is predicted with the expansion of human activities, such as mining, on croplands (Al-Hassan and Poulton, 2009; Stanturf et al., 2011). Schueler et al. (2011) show a loss of 58% of forest cover and 45% of farmlands to mining activities in the southwest of Ghana, accounting for a widespread spill-over effects of farm expansion into forested areas. Farm extensification has caused significant environmental damage, including wind and water erosion, leading to low soil organic matter and plant nutrient in the region (Stanturf et al., 2011; World Bank, 2006). In this regard, Aragón and Rud (2015) found that mining has reduced agricultural productivity by 40%, increasing poverty and child malnutrition in communities near mining areas in southwest Ghana.

Hence, questions have been raised; whether it is ethically right for governments to back mining sector development that brings food insecurity and rural impoverishment (Aragón and Rud, 2015; Downing, 2002; Pegg, 2006). Hitherto, governments are in the forefront touting the mineral potentials on their lands, which returns could support enhancement of the agriculture sector. For instance, DFID (2005) have suggested that a development of the mineral resource deposits in the three northern regions of Ghana could fast-track the area's growth trajectory, offset the effects of failing agricultural production and reduce poverty. However, sentiments are expressed, sometimes violently, about the associated risks of the mining sector to rural livelihood systems and land occupancy. For instance, in the 1990s, about 14 villages were displaced for mining and mineral exploration in the southwest of Ghana. Compensations that were paid did not cater for the youth, who had no physical property to account for (Picciotto, 2002). Considering the enduring effects of mining on livelihood, the youth reneged and insisted on the sustainable futures of mining and exploration activities on their lands (The Human Rights Clinic, 2010). Consequently, the disgruntled youth of communities develop an inclination to resort to illegal small-scale mining on large-scale exploration and mining concessions, leading to conflicts. These sorts of conflicts are common in developing countries, including Ghana (Hilson, 2002a). To this end, Bebbington et al. (2008) have opined that socio-political pressures on mining and mineral exploration are going to increase on the basis of the support local communities continue to gain from civil organisation groups.

Social mobilizations; rural development agendas, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), strengthen rural communities

on environmental protection and natural resource management, improved access to agricultural land and ensuring food security of the vulnerable. These civil groups and NGOs, such as FENAMAD and WACAM in Peru and Ghana, act as a mouth-piece of the local communities in ensuring judicious land expropriation (Haselip and Romera, 2011; Hilson, 2012; Hilson and Nyame, 2006). The movements mostly liaise with youth groups to educate and inform local communities of their rights to protect their natural resource base and means of livelihood. For example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR); the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention No.169 art 7.1; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) art. 32.1; have re-enforced local communities' resistance to mineral resource exploration and mining with the following: the right to free and informed consent, participation in the benefits of development, right to compensation of equivalent value, and mitigation of adverse effects (ILO, 2013 C 169). Whereas the mining codes and land title rights act of Ghana endorses compulsory land acquisition for exploration and mining (Minerals and Mining Act, 2006), article 26 of the UNDRIP; and C169, article 15.1 of the ILO state that local and traditional people have rights to the natural resources of their territories, including the right to own, use, develop and control the natural resources pertaining to their lands. This phenomenon has increased the growing confidence of local communities to start questioning exploration companies from the first appearance of personnel in their area.

Hence, proceedings of the international conference on 'Mining and community,' lauded that to avoid future issues, the mining industry should aim at developing good social relations with communities at the exploration stages (Cernea, 2003; Thomson and Joyce, 1997). To this end, Hilson (2002b); Hilson (2002c); Patel et al. (2016) have suggested several strategies for dealing with mining land use conflicts in developing countries, including Ghana. These strategies include mediations, reskilling of youth and Artisanal Small-Scaling mining sector support. However, Hilson (2002c); Jenkins (2004) suggest that land use conflicts in mining regions are diverse and complex and cannot be solved with one standard method in all regions. As result, a lot of earlier works have been done for managing large-scale mineral exploration and mining-induced land use conflicts in the historical southwestern mining areas of Ghana. Examples include the works of Hilson (2002a); Hilson (2002c); Hilson (2012); Hilson and Clifford (2010); Patel et al. (2016). However, very little is known about established strategies for developing and sustaining corporate social relations in the emerging northern savannah mining regions (Hodge, 2014; Slack, 2012), which are culturally and physically different from the pre-existing mining regions of Ghana. As such, there is little understanding of the links between existing land uses and the emerging large-scale mining sector activities in the northern savannah regions.

For these reasons, this paper seeks to identify strategies for perceiving the causes of land use conflicts specifically relevant to large-scale minerals exploration and mining in the emerging northern savannah mining areas of Ghana. To meet this aim, the following specific objectives have been pursued: (a) identify and analyse existing land use activities, spatial dynamics and adaptivity of the study area, in-situ; (b) understand the performance of current production patterns and results matrix of the study area in order to identify the potential impacts of mining on existing livelihoods; (c) Evaluate exploration and mining concessions, local livelihood space; local definition of resource creation and potential conflicts. The findings would illustrate how land use conflicts between local communities and the large-scale mining sector could be managed in emerging regions of mineral resource-rich Sub-Saharan Africa. Notably, this study is novel since not many studies in the field have considered developing strategies for enhancing company-community relations at the exploration stages in the region. Bell and Raiffa (1988) identified interpretative, normative, and prescriptive techniques for analysing resource-based conflicts. This paper uses the prescriptive and interpretative methods. Interpretative analy-

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