

Review of: "Customary Land Tenure, Mining, and the Development Question: Insights From a Transitional State"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

ISSUES FOR REVIEW

1. Some sentences not clear, e.g., Zimbabwe is endowed with many minerals, with 60 known minerals.
2. "Some local millers have done some Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Dinde area, such as building a clinic. "And now there is electricity at the school and clinic, and a borehole, and this is being done by local license holders." The local license holders are local people."

This is interesting, but there is need for evidence: how many companies are local and how many are international. Of these, what % engage in CSR. This should be shown and not just spoken!!!

1. The Mining Act does not specify that mines must do CSR.

This is an interesting point, but it would be good to highlight the place of the Community Development Agreement in Zimbabwe, which is a framework that has become an international conventional framework guiding community-investor relationships in the mining sector!!

1. Hence, it is foreseeable that companies that practice CSR are deemed not detrimental to customary land tenure.

*This is an interesting point in this area, but the voice of the author/s is silent, which is important in this paper. The question is how is this cementing exploitation and a license to exploit? See Dunlap, A. (2018). "A Bureaucratic Trap:" Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Wind Energy Development in Juchitán, Mexico. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 29(4), 88–108.*

1. The Chinese worked with inside men (locals) to acquire the land.

*This is an interesting point, but the paper does not interrogate the power relations that emerge from the mining activities. Who are the inside men? The paper presents the Chief as challenging the mining activities as well as being incorporated into the mining investors' interests, i.e., the author is talking of inside men, who are these men? There is need to unpack the power relations. See, for example: **"Then another local elite interested in the same mine started to mobilize the local community to resist the investments by the Chinese. The registered miner is alleged to have entered into an MOU with the affected individuals and local leadership that addressed the issue of relocation and compensation for the local people"**.*

1. The people are attached to the land so they resist relocating. There were issues of graves being dug up in Ward 8 to pave the way for mining activities. This was the catalyst for the community not to welcome new players; locals believe that their customs should be respected, and there is a natural desire to remain connected with the buried loved ones.

These are the issues that generate resistance in mining. What is missing is the authors' voice and interpretation of community resistance. How should we understand such resistance in Zimbabwe.

1. Before the coming of the Chinese, the women in the community used to benefit from VIDCO and Ward Development Committee (WADCO), but during the interviews, they demonstrated that they were disheartened by the fact that these platforms had ceased operating. These avenues would assist them in terms of getting information and empowerment programs. There is a general sense of mistrust and misgiving against a set of foreign investors in other wards, as the community has been holding on to unfulfilled promises by previous Chinese investors; as such, the community was not happy with the idea of new investors. Further, beyond the community's misgivings, truckloads of black granite are seen leaving the area for onward transportation to Italy, but the said companies are remitting little taxes to the government, and neither are the companies developing the communities around them. Communities now believe that Joint Ventures could work as a viable solution because people do not want to be removed from their areas; rather, a 50/50 setup of joint ventures would work and benefit all parties. Thus, it is foreseeable that customary land is viewed to be affected in situations where the community does not benefit. In a situation where benefits are received, issues of displacement and environmental damage are seldom discussed.

Concerning relocation, the community noted that even if the community is amenable to the relocation, the land they will be reallocated to might not be suitable for their usual agro-business activities that sustain their livelihood, which makes relocation undesirable. Sustainability is key to rural development (Dzvimbo et al., 2017). Thus, the fact that mining does not pay attention to the ecological concerns of the communities defeats the notion of development. Reports were also made of pollution in some of the rivers, destruction of roads, and destruction of grazing lands. These have been ongoing since some of the granite mining started more than 10 years ago. Sustainability is a key issue that must be placed at the centre stage in mining discussions (Bhatasara, 2013).

This section is emerging from nowhere, there is need for background information to appreciate the role of VIDCO and WADCO were playing before, what institutional change occurred and why the change occurred. Then, there is the question of Joint ventures, and yet earlier on, the argument was that the community was prevented from benefiting from CSR only. The question of sustainability in mining is a critical issue. However, there is no evidence about the local context to advance a particular argument that can sustain the argument of the authors. See, for example, Kirsch, S. (2010).

Sustainable Mining. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 34(1), 87–93. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-009-9113-x>

1. This similar view was also echoed, as there were strong views against some companies, especially the Chinese, for bringing their labour even for non-skilled jobs. The locals reported that this was unjust and against their aspirations of development through employment creation.

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employment, the paper needs to be focused in terms of presentation, i.e., political versus international political economy

1. Employment, migration, and environmental management: *While this is important and part of the broader question of community benefits from mining through creation of employment, the paper needs to be focused in terms of presentation, i.e., political versus international political economy. The same challenge is on migration. While important, the paper needs to be focused on which areas the paper is zeroing down on and the debates that are supporting that key argument. It seems to me that the paper is digressing to important but issues that do not build a coherent argument. Again, the paper slips into gender intersectionality and loses unpacking the land use question it sets out to un*

General Comments

The paper has outlined an objective but has not explored that objective to the end. The authors have not adequately presented the evidence; the old adage remains “show it and not just state.” These comments can easily be addressed, so revisions are possible.