

DEVELOPMENT AS CONFLICT: THEORETICAL NOTE ON RESOURCE-VIOLENCE NEXUS

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Abstract

The rich literature on the conflict impact of mineral resource development conceives development as a process that leads to progress and peace, but only inadvertently generates conflict. Development-induced conflict is explained away as aberrant and fleeting. The view neglects that some groups experience development as a penalising phenomenon, and misunderstand their efforts to undo victimisation. Development-induced conflicts are not pathological reactions to structural forces but political projects by the poor aimed at countering the cultural, ecological and economic displacement characteristic of development in developing societies. A re-conceptualization of resource development as conflict focuses attention on the inherently conflictual nature of actually existing development and the human and environmental costs it imposes on the voiceless and hardly visible. The article relies on three metaphors and eclectic theoretical sources in an effort to develop an alternative way of seeing development; as conflict rather than an entirely benign process. Such reconceptualisation of development draws attention to the need for policymakers and developments agencies to be attentive to the inherently conflictual nature of development and to provide for dealing with the contradictions. Moreover, it suggests a new way to understand and resolve the seemingly intractable resource-related conflicts in many parts of the world.

Keywords: Niger Delta, development, conflict, resources, violence

Introduction

Development theory and praxis mean different things to different people. To some it represents immanent or intentional development (Cowen & Shenton, 1996), planned public, private or combined mobilisation of resources in the promotion of economic growth, or an unending process of economic growth (Leftwich, 2000). One may also view development as the expansion of freedoms (Sen 1999) or as a discourse of domination (Leftwich, 2000). For Escobar (1984), development has not only failed, it remains a discourse or tool by which Western developed countries create the Third World and seek to manage and control it. It is 'a series of political technologies intended to manage and give shape to the reality of the Third World' (Escobar, 1995:130).

A view of development as discourse suggests that there exists a single encompassing development discourse. Such view neglects alternative and competing discourses such as 'basic needs' and 'development as freedom' approaches. It creates a dualism of impervious and top-down development discourse and bottom-up anti-

development discourse, leaving little space for middling discourses that allow for heterogeneity, exchange of experiences, ideas and responsiveness to local views (Grillo, 1997). It becomes difficult to explore the varieties of struggles and alternatives at the grassroots that do not conform to such dualism. Grillo emphasizes that development consists of multiple voices and sets of knowledge even if some voices are more influential. The understanding of development as composed of multiple voices and practices, rather than a single hegemonic discourse enables examination of the complex and contradictory relations between development discourses, and facilitates appreciation of the heterogeneous and conflicting strands of thoughts within particular discourse.

Cowen and Shenton (1996:454-45) emphasise that development is not only composed of doctrines, but also by 'the practice of development'. The processes of development always involve 'the organization, mobilization, combination, use and distribution of resources "in new ways that inevitably result in disputes over how the resources are to be used and who should lose or gain" (Leftwich, 2000:5). Approaching development as a set of conscious action geared at a desired goal is beneficial to this task. Such insights hardly reflect in current understanding of oil development, and the conflicts that have come to characterize the process in resource-rich developing countries. The dominant view understands resource development as a benign process that only inadvertently engenders conflict occasionally. In that view, conflict is extraneous to development. When peace is allowed to reign, oil development will inevitably promote economic prosperity for all stakeholders. Official government rhetoric is replete with such views.

The view that pushes a dichotomy between resource development and conflict is dangerous on at least two grounds. First, it disable scholarly understanding of how oil development as discourse and practice is inherently conflictual. Second, arising from the premise that conflict is separate and extraneous to resource development, such a view advances conflict prevention and resolution measures that are self-defeating. For instance, rather than point attention to the workings and power relations inherent in development, such measures emphasise external factors that have nothing to do with the workings of the development process. The article employs metaphors in an effort to theorise how and why development is properly conceptualized as inherently conflictual.

The rest of the article is organized as follows; the second section examines the agency-structure debate as it affects development in order to underline that development, far from being an overwhelming structure, is constituted by the relationships and actions of individuals in association. Section three deploys the metaphor of development as resource extraction to argue that resource extraction involves processes and actions that are not entirely developmental. Section four uses the metaphor of resource extraction as translocal strategic action field to emphasise that resource development connects multiple actors across spatial scales with differing and sometimes conflicting interests. Section five, employs the metaphor of conflict in the translocal strategic action field to examine how processes involved in the previous metaphors eventually play out as conflict.

Development: Agency and Structure Debate

During the 1950s, the established belief among British colonial officials and development scholars was that Westernisation was the best way to develop the newly decolonising societies. Westernisation would ensure the transition of the latter from backward and ancient condition to a modern state. In the economic sphere, Rostow's 'stages of growth' theory provided a blueprint for economic westernisation. It held up Western capitalist societies as the archetype of development. To achieve similar heights, African societies must pass through Rostow's five stages. Development economists assumed that following take-off, economic benefits of growth would trickle down to all levels of society. Dibua (2006) argues that such perspective had the effect of conceiving economic development in technical and bureaucratic terms, and displacing human beings as the core of development.

The Marxist paradigm saw the economy as reflecting a dominant mode of production, which informed politics and ideology. Contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production create crisis between capital and labour. Opportunities for transformation of production relations inhere in such crisis. Workers organise as collective actors to struggle for their class interests. It is in this dynamic that a society attains advancement to a socialist society. The view of development is structural. The dependency literature saw underdevelopment as the effect of the peculiar relationship between developed countries and underdeveloped countries. If underdeveloped countries are to reverse their underdevelopment, they must delink their economies from the global capitalist system. Marxist-informed debate within African political economy in the 1970s argues that foreign capital could only frustrate capitalist development in Africa because alignment with foreign capital best served the interests of the domestic bourgeoisie and as such, the former have little potential for autonomous action (Kaplinsky, 1979).

These approaches define the goal of development in terms of traditional societies yielding to the power and dictates of modern Western societies. Modernisation and Marxism deploy a unilinear conception of development. Similarly, dependency itself yields to a unilinear thought by arguing that development can only emerge by delinking from capitalist system. In the conceptualisation of the dependent economy, nothing happens therein that is of significance except for the impact of external forces. Such structural perspectives confuse the dynamics of mutually beneficial interaction between internal and external forces; how actors in the dependent country manoeuvre to adapt and benefit from external constraints. It obscures observation of how actions in the periphery frustrate the designs and intentions of external forces with the consequence that the effect of external intervention remains undetermined and the benefits of such outcomes have potential to move either way. Sewell argues that:

What tends to get lost in the language of structure is the efficacy of human action—or "agency," to use the currently favored term. Structures tend to appear in social scientific discourse as impervious to human agency, to exist apart from, but nevertheless to determine

the essential shape of, the strivings and motivated transactions that constitute the experienced surface of social life. A social science trapped in an unexamined metaphor of structure tends to reduce actors to cleverly programmed automatons (1992:2).

Repudiating all structuralist explanations of development outcomes, rational actor perspective clearly locates the question of development and underdevelopment in the rational-choice actions of societal actors. According to this perspective, elites, politicians, bureaucrats and even civil society groups, are rational self-interested actors who embark on actions they calculate to be in the best interest of themselves or their groups. What is clear from the structure-actor debacle is the tendency to retain dualism of structure and actor. Some find it convenient to take one extreme position or the other in the debate. Through the concept of 'structuration', Giddens (1981) attempt to integrate polar approaches, emphasising that structures are 'dual', that is 'both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems' (Giddens, 1981:27). He argues that structures do not only impose constraints on human agency; they are also enabling in that actors utilise their structured knowledge in creative ways. According to Giddens (1984: 2), in light of structuration theory, the focus of the social sciences should not be the experience of the individual actor or the forms of societal totality, but 'social practices ordered across space and time'. For him structures do not exist independently of actors and actions.

Tilly argues, by adopting relational realism, the doctrine that stresses that connections, social ties and transactions constitute the 'central stuff of social life' (Tilly, 1997:4). Relational analysis follows networks, power relations across spatial scales and 'connections that concatenate, aggregate and disaggregate readily, form organizational structures at the same time as they shape individual behaviour'. Murdoch and Marsden (1995) emphasises that the basic object of sociological analysis should be 'action-in-context' rather than the individual as individual action is contingent upon the action of others. Therefore, they emphasise that:

The outcomes of social episodes depend not on how variables, such as rules and resources, "structure" situations but on how these are represented, interpreted and utilized by participants *within* situations. Structural variables do not specify a unique and unambiguous course of action for they have to be interpreted against a background of situational features (Murdoch & Marsden, 1995:371).

The scholars argue that the structural cannot explain what happens in situations given that it is itself made within micro-situations. Employing Latour's (1986:264-265) distinction between 'power in *potential*' and 'power in *actu*', they argue that the amount of power an individual exercises is not a function of how much power she has, but a consequence of the number of actors involved in the composition of such power. Therefore, to "explain" power (and trace power geometry) we need to examine how collective action comes about, how actors come to be associated, and how they

work in unison. And to understand what binds actors together, again, we cannot privilege the structural (Murdoch & Marsden, 1995:372).

In effect, the study of power is necessarily the study of associations. In other words, power, society and structure are outcomes consequent of the association of actors. To be powerful within associations is to be able to sign up, persuade and enlist others into an association on conditions that enable initial actors to represent all the others. Thus associated, actor worlds or situations are not independent but tied together in associations, which may result in the domination of some by others. Through association, actors can do things in one place that affect or dominate another place. The Actor Network Theory (ANT) employs *translation* as a conceptual tool to explore how actors are enabled to determine other spaces. Translation refers to:

The relational realism framework rejects a view of development and underdevelopment as conditions imposed by one set of powerful actors on another set of powerless actors. It contradicts and thus, allows for dismissal of the view of development as unilinear and predetermined outcome of some actors and not others. It dispenses with the Marxist view of development as the outcome of the conflict between already formed classes imbued with class identities. In eschewing a structural rendition of development, the framework argues that development is an outcome of the specific association between people and between places. Those associations are not only social but involve materials, texts and technologies as well. The associations are fluid and open to contestation; they involve interactions among a range of actors across spatial scales seeking to secure advantages, totalise or discredit given development discourses, of actors adopting or adapting to or contesting new situations (Murdoch 1998). The following three sections use metaphors to convey the fluid and contestatory nature of development.

Development as Resource Extraction

Traditional common sense construed primary commodity production for export as a primary engine of economic growth (North, 1955; Mikesell *et al.* 1971). Some argued that given the comparative advantage in the production of primary goods, developing countries should allocate a substantial portion of their productive factors to raw materials production and exports (Mikesell *et al.* 1971). Critics argue that the benefits of trade in primary commodities accrue to industrial countries and that concentration on raw materials export could hinder industrial growth. Other economists stress, 'the role of resource industries as a leading sector that, under certain conditions, can induce broadly based development' (Mikesell *et al.* 1971:17). Although the governments of newly independent countries showed diffidence toward transnational capital, seeing them as neo-colonial agents (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004), the prevailing belief was that foreign direct investment (FDI) represented a *sine qua non* for the economic transformation of developing countries (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004).

A teleological assumption of an inevitable link between investment in the extractive industry and economic development was characteristic of (neo) Marxist development theories and modernisation theory (Schuurman, 1993). In both sets of

theories, the tendency was to relate the entire process of planning, action and effects, and to assume that the three stages were completely within the control of human intention or agency (Ferguson, 1994). It failed to register that the outcomes of calculated human activities or development can spin out of control (Elias, 1991). Such modes of thought remain prevalent and largely inform state-led or neoliberal development and, why they fail (Scott, 1998). Therefore, development action is a complex and unpredictable phenomenon, and may give rise to effects unplanned by its practitioners.

In addition, development planners failed to admit that development is a mixed bag of 'goods and bads' (Goulet, 1968; Goulet & Wilber, 1996). In that vein, champions of development planning employed a sort of, development mantra 'profitability measure' (Stolper, 1966). According to early development planners, the basis of economic investment decisions should be on the criteria of profit and nothing else. They assumed that economic growth would somehow trickle down and percolate every cranny of society. That their hope was misplaced is forgivable but what is not is their failure to reckon with the uneven distribution of development gains and industrial externalities. In that regard, little consideration went to the impact of foreign capital on the environment and the effect of environmental change on people and communities. Given the growing divergence between promise and reality from the 1960s, State-led modernisation came under serious scrutiny, along with the close association drawn between natural resource exports, capital and economic growth (Schuurman, 1993).

Oil extraction as development is best captured by approaching it as a network of social relationships, involving an array of individuals and organisations, through which processes of development operate (Bebbington & Kothari, 2006). How such form of development is constituted and mobilised becomes clear by looking at the networks. The forms of development are also shaped by ideas and practices that are enrolled into the networks. Thus, Bebbington and Kothari argue that:

Within such networks, ideas and normative arguments about development are debated and translated into intentional forms of intervention; resources are negotiated and distributed; and orthodoxies about "best practice" are formed and challenged. At the same time... the forms taken by such development networks, the ideas that circulate within them, and their geographical manifestations can only be understood in the light of the prior social and institutional networks out of which they emerged and/or onto which they grafted their activities (Bebbington & Kothari, 2006: 851).

The scholars argue that transition from colonialism to development indicated a shift in emphasis, rather than the end of an epoch, and as such present development reflects relationships, perceptions and attitudes prevalent at the end of the empire, and which traverse spatial scales. In the case at hand, these networks of relationships manifest in a specific place or action field.

Resource Extraction as Trans-local Strategic Action Field

Development occurs within a field of encounters between different actors, national and international institutions, and officials of development agencies, NGOs and discourses (Ribeiro, 2002). Suffusing this field are differing political visions, interests and power positions. To Ribeiro (2002:170-171), large-scale development works assemble an impressive array of financial and industrial capital, technical elites and workers, ‘fusing local, regional, national, international and transnational levels of integration.’ These projects relied on powerful institutions some of which have been sources and centres of diffusion of development ideas and practice. To Bebbington and Kothari (2006: 850-854) some types of development form and mobilise through networks and flows of people and resources, which reach across ‘institutional domains and vast geographical spaces’. The scholars argue that after actors enrol in development networks, they become agents within it and conduits for the dissemination of dominant ideas and discourses.

Dunning and Wirpsa (2004) examined the socio-spatial complexities surrounding resource extraction. To them, the rising dominance of foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinational corporations in the extractive sector coincides with increasing global demand for oil and gas, and an increased readiness by the United States to deploy military protection of strategic energy sources. As a result, the interactions and linkages among local, national, trans-national and multinational actors ‘with varied but abiding interests in promoting or restricting the flow of commodities like oil have a crucial impact on the incidence and character of localized conflict’ (Dunning & Wirpsa, 2004:82). They argue that oil shapes the nature of conflict given the relationship of oil to actors and processes operating at the global level, implanted in the local environment. Oil resides only in fixed places, necessitating extractive activities at that specific locale.

Fundamental to the control of oil is the availability of ‘infrastructure, security and technology to convert it into asset transportable’ (Dunning & Wirpsa, 2004:82) across national boundaries. Because oil is simultaneously national and multinational, state oil companies and multinational corporations seek to influence the governance structure, in both the host country and global sphere, which regulate the extraction, production and distribution of oil. The linkages and interactions among local, national and trans-national spaces shape the material interests of competing local actors and the ‘discursive strategies upon which they draw to legitimate conflict and militarization’ (Dunning & Wirpsa, 2004:84). They fault a state-centric focus arguing that the State is just one of many actors attempting to exercise dominion over territories where oil-related violence emerges.

If oil extraction as development churns out benefits for some and costs for others, and has become a contested terrain, it is helpful to describe it as a ‘strategic action field’ or a social space where two or more organised collective actors engage in conflictual actions (Fligstein & McAdam, 1995). Strategic action fields are socially constructed arenas within which differentially endowed groups employing their resources vie for advantage. According to Fligstein and McAdam (1995), the utility of the strategic action field (SAF) lays in its flexibility and the fact that some groups

in the action field are themselves strategic action fields. What they perhaps pay little attention to is the view that SAFs could be transnational in scope, in which case they would encompass actors located across spatial scales. Given that oil is an international commodity, its extraction necessarily cuts across spatial scales. Therefore, the trans-local SAF is composed of actors at the local, national and international scales.

Fligstein and McAdam (1995) argue that the first rule in an emergent field or unorganised field is to outline a stable definition of the situation, values and rules guiding relations within the field. Imposition of such rules may come from cooperative relations among the groups or, be imposed by members of a dominant group. Social relations among the field members may be cordial or hostile. Action in the SAF seeks to create and sustain the field in order to ensure uninterrupted flow of group benefits. The rules are, however, not benign, nor are they arrived at consensually. To the contrary, they reflect an order imposed by a more powerful or a set of groups that are more powerful. Within the strategic action field, it is feasible to distinguish between ‘incumbents and challengers’.

Incumbents are powerful organizations or groups which have the necessary political or material resources to enforce an advantageous view of appropriate field behaviour and definition of field membership on other groups.... Challengers are organizations or groups which define themselves as members of a given strategic action field, but generally accept the given social order and the advantages it gives incumbents either because they fear retribution by incumbents or because their survivability is increased by accepting such a view. Challengers are those groups who ordinarily exert little control over the field (Fligstein & McAdam, 1995:7).

Values and norms in the action field are created through repeated performances such that the order-creating process is always contested and resisted (Henry, Mohan and Yanacopulos, 2004).

Conflict in the Trans-local Strategic Action Field

The field of strategic action is composed of processes of integration and disintegration, stability and conflicts, benefits and costs. The news of the commencement of extractive activities may generate opposition or excitement among the would-be stakeholders based on expectations. Beyond these potential initial responses, the extractive industry, as a network of relations, induces conflicting experiences, interests and visions of social organisation especially with regard to resource production, resource allocation, distribution of benefits and costs, environmental risks, environmental management, resource control, the nature and costs of development and the relationships between firm and stakeholders (Albrecht, Amey & Amir, 1996). Where development induced displacement and conflicts resonate with problems of socioeconomic marginalisation and poverty in the wider

society, the hardening of differing positions and intensity of conflict assume dreadful dimensions.

The development process generates contradictions and ‘polarization between functional elites and the functionally superfluous’ (Apter, 1993:3). According to Apter, the functional elites organise capital-intensive production methods that engender the marginalisation of those who become functionally superfluous. Such production techniques contribute to the large-scale transformation of the physical topography, which in turn imperil the livelihood of the land dependent community. Priority goes to sustaining uninterrupted exploitation and supply or conditions favourable to capital accumulation over unemployment, local livelihood, social, cultural and environmental effects of development (Doyle, 2008). As Apter emphasises, the political system is least responsive to the marginalised, occasioning the ‘invisibility’ of the latter. It is within such contexts that emancipatory projects begin to emerge. It seems important to note that both the incumbent and challenger mobilise resources to sustain or alter the status quo (Dreiling, 2000).

Functional elites may attempt to protect their ‘privileged access’ and ‘privileged accounts’ by arguing the benefits their presence or operations provide the field and entire economy, and how any adverse form of intervention in the status quo might affect the economy (Freudenburg, 2005: 104). Moreover, the elites might resort to ‘diversionary reframing’ as a strategy of changing the terms of the debate in which strenuous effort is made to dent the credibility of challengers or directly point at something else other than what challengers named as the object of their grievances. Furthermore, elites maintain their privileges through the social construction of ‘quiescence or “non-problematicity”’ (Freudenburg, 2005: 105). Situations and events described by challengers as displacing and destructive are energetically constructed by the elites as non-problematic, amenable to resolution, and/or defined as emanating from something other than the operations of the elites.

While early sociological exploration of system dislocation attributed dysfunction to passing aberrations, and held closely to ontology of social stability, Marxist-inspired conflict theories see society as composed of groups with competing self-interests; workers and owners of the means of production. The conflict perspective argues that instability rather than equilibrium, conflict rather than harmony are the norm, and not the exception, in social relations. A Marxian conflict perspective directs focus to the field of power play, and enables identification of the class basis of the conflicting actors, and what class of actors exercises hegemony over what other class. While class analysis has its uses, a structuralist perspective homogenises within a class a whole range of differing groups. It creates a dualism of class antagonism between capitalists and workers. In effect, the divisions, contests and negotiations within classes as well as the trans-class collaborations between elements of the bourgeoisie and workers remain hidden from view.

The resource mobilisation model suggests that the strategic action field is composed of actors competing to secure material resources, with little or no attention given to cultural and symbolic resources (Crossley, 2003). Some scholars argue that conflicts as embodied by social movements revolve around struggles over identity,

meaning and defence of ideology and way of life (Escobar, 1996). Escobar sees social movements as resisting development. To the contrary, Schuurman is of the view that social movements are not in opposition to modernity but compose a demand for inclusion (Schuurman, 1993). The implication of the debate is that there is a multiplicity of motivations behind conflicts. The situation, therefore, requires analytical tools that will enable a delineation of the complex interests and motivations that power conflict in terms of intra-and inter-group dynamics, and in regard to the object of conflict.

Some scholars widen the analysis, showing that political factors evident in negotiation, collaboration, competition and conflict that arise from the pursuit of self-interests characterise oil development, and that such politics traverses local, national and global scales (Watts, 2004, 2005; Dunning & Wirpsa, 2004). Murdoch (1998:362) shows how through 'translation' relations are established between entities, spaces and actors in line with 'terms of enrolment', which give some actors the ability to 'prescriptively "act-at-a-distance"', and 'dominate peripheries'. Instead of a dualism of power and resistance, Murdoch advocates that all spaces are 'complex interrelations between modes of ordering and forms of resistance so that "the effects of power and resistance are intertwined"' (Murdoch, 1998:364).

Watts examines FDI in oil development and identifies the complex and violent transformations induced by extractive activities. According to Watts (2004:53), 'how oil capitalism (what I call petro-capitalism) produces, from the realities of forms of rule and political authority into which it is inserted, specific sorts of what I, following Rose, call "governable space" (that is a specific configuration of territory, identity and rule)'. He focuses on three such spaces, 'chieftainship', the 'space of indigeneity' and the 'nation', the conflict and violence associated with each, and the genesis of violence associated with the different 'sorts of governable or ungovernable spaces' (Watts, 2004:53). Watts emphasises the contemporaneous making and reworking of varying forms of 'pre-existing rule and governable space' following the insertion of federal oil revenues (Watts, 2004:54). Each governable space is a product of the oil complex and petro-capitalism and the spaces work against one another. Moreover, each space has a central contradiction:

at the level of the oil community, the overthrow of gerontocratic authority but its substitution by a sort of violent youth-led Mafia rule. At the level of the ethnic community is the tension between civic nationalism and a sort of exclusivist militant particularism. At the level of the nation one sees the contradiction between oil-based state centralization and state fragmentation (Watts, 2004:54-55).

What the emphasis on economic benefits and interactions within the strategic action field neglects is the question of where differing values in the action field comes from. A case in point relates to the assumption of rational pursuit of self-interests as a theory of human motivation, and from which one can deduce that actors in the action field act to maximise their 'self-interest', increasing profit or more development

projects. However, Parsons (1940) argues that economic pursuits happen within the institutional framework of society. Parsons shows that individuals acquire the moral sentiments attached to the normative pattern through early socialisation, and that well-integrated individuals are able to integrate such moral sentiments with their self-interests (Parsons, 1940).

Conclusion

However conceived, development is both doctrine and practice, and involves the organization, mobilization, combination, use and distribution of resources in ways that inevitably result in disputes over how the resources are to be used and who should lose or gain. Thus, development can be seen as a set of conscious action geared at a desired goal. Far from a benign process, resource development is inherently conflictual. The view that conflict is external to development disables scholarly understanding of how resource development as discourse and practice is inherently conflictual. Development is not a unilinear, predetermined condition imposed by powerful actors on less powerful actors. Instead, it is an outcome of the specific association between people and between places across spatial scales seeking to secure advantages, and of actors taking advantage of or contesting new situations.

Development occurs within a field of encounters between various actors across spatial scales. The actors bring into the field differing development discourses, plans, visions, interests and power positions. Resource extraction as development is therefore a network of social relationships, involving a range of individuals and organisations through which processes of development occur. Moreover, resource extraction is a translocal strategic action field because it assembles an array of human and material forces in ways that fuse local, regional, national and transnational levels of collaboration. The actors have interests, which are sometimes complementary and most often conflictual, which they attempt to realise by manoeuvring other actors. In other words, the externalities of development and the costs they impose on the less powerful are not accidental. To the contrary, they adhere to development itself.

The strategic action field involves processes of stability and conflicts, benefits and costs. It induces conflicting experiences, especially with regard to resource production, resource allocation, distribution of benefits and costs, and environmental risks. In effect, the development process generates contradictions. For instance, functional elites organise capital-intensive production methods that contribute to the large-scale transformation of the physical topography, which in turn imperil the livelihood of the land dependent community. The elites prioritise uninterrupted exploitation, supply, and capital accumulation over unemployment, local livelihood, and environmental effects of development. The result is that those who benefit and the excluded mobilize resources to sustain or alter the status quo.

Development is a contradictory process; it involves multiple voices, visions and interests. Actors compete to steer development in a direction that would benefit them. In the process, some gain more than others, and some others lose out. This inherent quality of development leads actors who benefit little, if at all, to mobilize to alter the nature of development itself. Attempts to alter the status quo are often

resisted by those who benefit from the existing form of development. The conflictual nature of development has been glossed over ostensibly because of the evident material benefits of development. That development churns out benefits for some should not blind scholarship to the fact that it imposes costs on the less powerful. Similarly, there is need to understand that even the benefits that development generate are not the result of a benign process mounted for the general good. Instead, development goods, just as development bads, are the result of contradictory processes set in motion by actors with competing interests.

Conflict is a normal part of resource development. Resource-related violence is not an aberration or a pathological condition that can be dealt with once and for all. Far from being a 'foreign body', a disturbance to a benign process of development, conflict is the mechanism through which development organizes itself and distributes benefits and costs. Efforts to minimize the costs and conflicts associated with resource development fail by ignoring the process of development itself or by focusing on factors that have little to do with the actors that compose development and the power relations among them.

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