

People, Power & Politics: What is needed to harness the extractive industries for development in sub-Saharan Africa?

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Last week over 40 PhD researchers, leading academics, and expert industry practitioners met at Surrey Business School to explore the challenges and pathways to realising the development potential of extractive industries (mining, oil and gas). This interdisciplinary workshop, 'Harnessing Extractive Industries for Development in sub-Saharan Africa', fostered dialogue, laid the basis for future collaboration, and identified that while there are no silver bullets, nor short-term solutions, it is all about the people, power and politics when it comes to ensuring the development of the region's extractive resources.

Re-thinking Existing Discourses: What do eggs, toothpaste, and jeans all have in common?

Opening the workshop with his keynote speech, **Professor Gavin Hilson** focused on an often overlooked, and largely informal sector that supports upwards of 13 million people in the region: artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). He drew attention to the shifting entrepreneur vs. poverty-driven narratives in donor and policy-making circles over the past four decades, and pointed to the emerging idea of ASM for wealth-creation. Crucially, he underscored that beyond these descriptions ASM should be understood and prioritised as a significant development opportunity and vital part of the regions livelihood portfolio.

This theme of re-thinking and questioning assumptions continued throughout the two-day event with **Dr Daniel Franks** arguing for the need to prioritise the development of lesser-known minerals. As a first step, he advocated that we should do away with the more commonly known classification, 'low-value minerals and metals', and rename it 'Neglected Development Minerals'. To the surprise of many now-enlightened audience members (myself included), we were reminded that *Neglected Development Minerals* are used in the production of eggs, toothpaste, and jeans as well as many other industrial minerals, construction materials, and, dimension and semi-precious stones. Mined mostly for domestic economic purposes (as opposed to trading on international commodity markets), these minerals present a significant development opportunity, one that Daniel explained the UNDP capacity building **ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme** is hoping to catalyse.

Later, during the lively panel discussion, which saw five experts¹ from industry, academia and the NGO sector share their reflections, Dr Juliana Stoyanova, Head of Extractive Industries Governance at Adam Smith International, once again challenged us to re-think what harnessing the extractive industries looks like in different contexts. Highlighting the importance of understanding the people, power, and politics that shape the response of agencies, governments and the private sector, and the design of development programmes.

Listening to Communities

Throughout the workshop a number of presenters (as summarised on [Twitter](#)) reminded us that we must listen to and truly empower communities in decision-making in order to fully harness extractives for development. Sarah Caven, an exploration geologist, invited us to stay at field camps in rural Ethiopia and explore the many potential linkages between exploration companies, community development, and artisanal and small-scale mining. We also heard about the need for local content, and capacity building through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through case studies on CSR in Chad, employee retention in Oman's oil sector, and community contestation, engagement and labour dynamics in Mozambique's Liquid Natural Gas sector.



'At that time I was as poor as a church mouse'

Stephen Okyere, a diamond dealer/miner from Ghana, tells Professor Gavin Hilson about the damaging effects of the 2006-2007 Kimberly Process embargo on his hometown of Akwatia during the workshop question and answer session.

The links to the ground were further cemented during the question and answer session with Stephen Okyere, a diamond dealer and small-scale miner. Stephen told us about the devastating effects of the 2006-2007 Kimberly Process embargo on his hometown of Akwatia, where Ghana's only major deposits of industrial diamonds originate. With no way to export their hard-won diamonds, people were left destitute. Many, including taxi drivers, food sellers, and other small business owners dependent on the small-scale mining sector left the area and it became 'a ghost town'. This was a timely reminder that despite our best intentions we must always consider the impact on communities at the local level when designing and implementing high-level governance policies and programmes.

Working Together – academia, industry and NGOs

The most resounding message from the two-day interdisciplinary workshop was that 'we need more of these' as the Natural Resource Governance Institute's Joe Williams appealed to the audience during the panel discussion. It is clear that there is a significant gap in which we as academics from across the social and geo-sciences, expert industry practitioners, the private sector and non-governmental organisations can work together to improve dialogue and understanding, find synergies, and harness the extractive industries for development in sub-Saharan Africa to the benefit of the countries and communities that own them.

Acknowledgments

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List of Participants

Name	Organisation
Dr Abigail Hilson	Royal Holloway, University of London
Aflah Al Shaqsi	University of Surrey
Alexander Malden	S&P Global Market Intelligence
Angelique Gatsinzi	University of Surrey
Dauda Suleman	University of Surrey
Donald Bray	Chalkstone Limited
Dr Daniel Franks	UNDP
Dylan McFarlane	Camborne School of Mines, University of Exeter
Elizabeth Koomson	University of Michigan
Eunice Adu-Darko	Central University, Ghana
Phillip Worsdell	University of Surrey
Professor Gavin Hilson	University of Surrey
Henry Akinola	University of Surrey
James Lesser	HSBC
James Mitchell	University of Bath
James McQuilken	University of Surrey
Joseph Williams	Natural Resource Governance Institute
Jon Dibben	Jon Dibben Jewellery Designer
Jorge Tarifa Fernández	Universidad de Almería
Joshua Sandin	Royal Holloway, University of London
Josh Read	Camborne School of Mines, University of Exeter
Juliana Stoyanova	Adam Smith International
Kate Symons	University of Edinburgh
Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey	Graduate Institute Geneva
Matthew McKernan	Independent Consultant
Mohammad Abdullah	University of Surrey
Mollie Gleiberman	University of Antwerp
Dr Natalia Yakovleva	Newcastle University, London
Nora Sadler	Royal Holloway, University of London
Patrice Bois	Technip
Dr Penda Diallo	University of Edinburgh
Dr Peter Oakley	Royal College of Art
Rosanna Carver	University of Lancaster
Dr Roy Maconachie	University of Bath
Sarah Caven	Consultant Exploration Geologist
Stephen Okyere (Atta)	Chief ASM Fieldwork Advisor
Wouter Bam	Stellenbosch University
Yorbana Seigh-Goura	University of Neuchatel