

Playing the 'game' of transparency and accountability in Kyrgyzstan's resource governance

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Valorisation Addendum

In line with Article 23 of the regulation governing the attainment of the doctoral degree at Maastricht University, these final remarks introduce the valorisation opportunities of this doctoral dissertation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development suggests leveraging the wealth in the extractive sector to deliver improved livelihoods and facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNSDSN et al., 2015; IGF Forum, 2018). This dissertation echoes this suggestion and further asserts that only a transparent and accountable extractive sector can truly deliver wealth to support the achievement of the SDGs. A transparent and accountable extractives sector offers opportunities to contribute to the majority of the SDGs: poverty eradication (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), life on land (SDG 15), sustainable and affordable energy (SDG 7), climate action (SDG 13), industry and infrastructure (SDG 9), and peace and justice (SDG 16) (UNDP, 2016). Resource extraction, particularly mining, can alter the life of local communities if not managed prudently. Mining requires access to land and water (Bringezu et al., 2016), which often affects the livelihoods of the local population living close to these mining sites. Mining has potentially significant environmental and health impacts that may outweigh economic benefits. As discussed in various sections of the dissertation, conflicts in Kyrgyzstan's extractives sector are undergirded by ecological and livelihood concerns, which are partly circumscribed within discourses and practices around transparency and accountability in Kyrgyzstan's natural resource governance. This insight highlighted the need for a nexus approach in policymaking: centralizing the connections between the ecology and economic growth and livelihoods within policies on transparency and accountability in resource governance. In other words, the discourses and practices around TA within the case communities make clear that TA policies are not only about ensuring direct engagement and citizens' right to know (information) and participate, but also guaranteeing economic, socially-just, and ecological benefits for citizens. This nexus approach to TA policymaking ensures sustained peace and inclusive development, especially in resource-rich, post-Soviet countries such as Kyrgyzstan.

A nexus approach to TA policymaking requires recognizing and supporting the agency and direct participation of communities in natural resource governance. According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development (2019), particular attention should be paid to indigenous people, who account for 5% of

the world's total population, manage 28% of the world's land surface, and are the guardians of 80% of the global biodiversity (para 2). Community participation in natural resource governance is accordingly undeniable but often undermined by power-holders. This dissertation conveyed the utility of the bottom-up approach, shaped by non-elite communities, in revitalizing the transparency and accountability agenda in resource governance. It placed community participation at the heart of policy implementation in the extractives sector. Although cautious about the tendency to overly romanticize the agency of communities, this dissertation carefully deconstructs resource politics to identify the various exercises of different forms of power by community actors within the studied mining communities. Such exercise of power by community actors aligns with the rights of citizens enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention), to name a few. Promoting the practice of these rights and community agency requires investing in processes of building trust, encouraging social learning, and managing and meeting expectations, especially related to improved livelihoods and ensuring a balance of power in decision-making.

The dissertation also notes that understanding the agency of community actors requires paying attention to the political games engaged in by actors within TA discourses and practices. The conceptualization of political games also reflects the ongoing geopolitical competition for raw materials and growing concerns for maintaining sovereignty in strategic sectors such as the extractives sector. According to the International Resource Panel's report (2019), more resources will have to be extracted in the foreseeable future in view of the expected population growth, expanding middle class, and rapid urbanization in emerging economies, which require infrastructure and goods, the key drivers of demand for minerals. Global focus on low-carbon future in the context of climate emergency and digitalization, further increases the demand for minerals and metals, as they are the backbone of (green) technologies (Raw Materials Week, 2018; UNEP meeting, 2018). The perspectives of increased resource extraction shaped the re-emergence of global policy debates about how to change the 'extractivist'-type of economies and behavior of actors in the sector. This dissertation speaks to this theme by stressing the critical role of transparency and accountability and citizens' engagement in ensuring inclusive, just, and sustainable transition. By illustrating the simultaneous use of transparency and accountability discourses and practices for public and private benefits, this dissertation highlights the challenges and complexities involved in aligning actors' incentives and behavior with a collective goal of ensuring a transparent and accountable extractive sector.

The challenges and complexities of aligning actors' incentives and behavior with the goal of a transparent and accountable extractive sector suggest the need to rethink how to drive a TA agenda in natural resource governance. This dissertation echoes calls for a socialization agenda within TA discourses and practices. This means mainstreaming transparency and accountability principles throughout the life cycle of the mining sector and global value chains. It is of paramount importance to integrate transparency and accountability in the existing economic, environmental, political, and social frameworks of governance at multiple levels. Transparency and accountability are not only about ensuring access to information about industrial minerals, produced in 116 countries (out of the 155 countries), generating the total value of 132 billion USD in 2014 (Riechl et al., 2017). It is also about addressing environmental concerns related to 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress being resultant from resource extraction and processing (Global Resource Outlook, 2019).

Finally, the author has engaged in discussions related to the dissertation topic in policy and academic circles: the EITI Conference (2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan), Contesting Nature in Central Asia, American University-Central Asia (2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan), Natural Resources Governance Workshop, University of Central Asia (2017, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan), Natural Resource Governance Institute's Summer School (2017, Baku, Azerbaijan); Mining Conference, George Washington University (2017, D.C., USA), Annual Conference of Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (2017, D.C., USA); Global Partnership Forum for Social Accountability, World Bank (2017, D.C., USA); Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, and Metals (2017, Geneva, Switzerland); Exeter University Central Asia Workshop (2018, Exeter, UK); EC Raw Materials Week (2018, Brussels, Belgium), and others. These discussions informed the policy recommendations of the dissertation and indicated the relevance and cross-cutting nature of the research topic.

Chapters 2, 3, and 6 were published as an article in *Post-Soviet Affairs* and another article was submitted to *Central Asian Survey*. Chapters 5 and 7 are under consideration for publication in academic journals and books.