

BOOK REVIEW

Natural Resource Extraction and Indigenous Livelihoods: Development Challenges in an Era of Globalization, edited by EMMA GILBERTHORPE and GAVIN HILSON (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014, ISBN 978-1-4094-3777-2, £65.60 (h/b), pp. 279).

This geographically wide-ranging edited collection, featuring 12 original contributions from anthropologists, legal scholars, geographers and management accountants, provides a much-needed critical response to the recent proliferation of extractive industry ‘best practice’ standards for interaction with indigenous people. As Andrew Barry notes in his erudite afterword, the World Bank’s own Operation Policy (OP 4.10), widely cited by the more progressive among mining, oil and gas firms, ‘serves to give Indigenous Peoples a particular form of transnational policy existence’ (page 275). Recent guidelines and position statements issued by the International Council on Mining and Metals (2013) and the oil industry’s equivalent body IPIECA (2012) have served to stabilize definitions of indigenous people as marginalized, culturally distinct groups with meaningful and particular attachments to place that predate colonialism—and as particular kinds of development beneficiaries or subjects who must be enrolled in ‘meaningful’ forms of participation ‘consistent with their traditional decision-making processes’ (International Council on Mining and Metals, 2013). So far so good. But polished participation policies are an eerily familiar phenomenon for most development scholars. Many will wonder about the actual encounters between resource-dependent indigenous people and large-scale extractive developments. These tend to take place, after all, at quite some distance from the metropolitan ‘theatres of virtue’ (Rajak, 2011) where congratulatory best practice guidelines are hammered out by corporate social responsibility professionals. It is precisely this relationship, between *best* practice and *actual* practice, with which Gilberthorpe and Hilson’s collection grapples.

Whereas many studies of indigenous people and extractive industries have focused on social movements and rights claims (e.g. Sawyer & Gomez, 2012), this volume is organized around livelihood concerns. As such, the contributors refuse to treat indigenous people as ‘cartoon avatars always opposed to the existence and operation of the oil and gas industry’ (McNeish, 2012: 64). Martin, Trigger and Parmenter’s chapter locates their investigation of livelihood sustainability around the Century Mine in Queensland in terms of the anxieties produced by ostensible victories for Aboriginal rights, including the *Native Title Act* of 1993. These rights have created

‘significant tension between those Aboriginal people favouring mining as the basis for economic opportunity, and those pursuing an agenda of securing rights to land and recognition and the strengthening of what is commonly termed “culture”’ (page 39).

This is reflected in the text of the Gulf Communities Agreement (1997) signed between the State of Queensland, Minmetals Group and Aboriginal representatives during the Century Mine’s development. Martin et al. have highlighted an important concern, and there is a clear and devastating lack of economic opportunity for Aboriginal people living in Australia’s mining regions (Langton, 2010). But Martin et al.’s conclusion that ‘productive livelihoods, including those gained through mining... can be seen as essential to the maintenance of “culture” in any sustainable form’ seems a little wanting and perhaps even circular, in light of their definition of culture as that which includes ‘values, dispositions and practices... related to gaining a livelihood’ (page 51). Perhaps the editors, who make clear at the outset their interest in the interaction between natural resource extraction and ‘cultures’ (page 2), could have demanded a little more nuance from their contributors over the use of a concept that is capable of being both nebulous and semantically dense. Haley and Fisher’s slightly uncritical account

of apparent challenges to Iñupiat recruitment at Alaska's Red Dog Mine that presents a 'lack of initiative' (page 25) and an absence of time discipline (page 28) in terms of Iñupiat culture and values is a case in point. Nonetheless, the potential of a culturally oriented collection that investigates the relationship between natural resource extraction and indigenous livelihoods is evident especially in Warnars and Bebbington's discussion of alternative visions for mining-based development in Ecuador.

Warnars and Bebbington start with the recent inclusion of the Quechua *sumak kawsay* ('good living') principle in Ecuador's constitution. They ask whether this newly codified, culturally embedded understanding of worthy livelihood can enable the transformation of antimining sentiment 'into constructive proposals for social, economic and ecological alternatives' (page 110) around the El Pangui mine in Ecuador's Shuar homeland. They find that groups opposed to the mine have failed to articulate their opposition into 'one overarching proposal' (page 123). The elaboration of *sumak kawsay* into a National Plan for Good Living did little to prevent its core principles being contradicted by President Correa's 2008 U-turn, after which he declared that 'responsible mining is possible' (page 118) and that mining-based development would bring prosperity, rather than a curse, to Ecuador. In Abigail Hilson's chapter on the new oil-producing regions of sub-Saharan Africa, we are reminded that despite decades of work highlighting the potential for resource booms to further entrench poverty and inequality through the 'resource curse', state-level policy makers may be too caught up in cornucopian claims making during 'the "Countdown to First Oil"' (page 138) to give serious consideration to any negative implications that may arise for indigenous and other marginal livelihoods.

The resource curse is tackled head on by Gilberthorpe in her own contribution. Gilberthorpe hopes to have what she calls the 'money rain' phenomenon—the sudden circulation of vast quantities of wealth among a selected few mine area residents—included among the other well-established symptoms of the resource curse (such as rent-seeking, patrimonialism, greed-driven conflict and an undiversified macroeconomy). Focusing on members of the Fasu language group resident around the Kutubu oil fields in Papua New Guinea, Gilberthorpe notes that payments of royalties to newly constituted and tightly bounded 'Incorporated Land Groups' create 'a new language of membership and connectivity' (page 83) that undermines 'longstanding obligations established over generations of activity' (page 87), thus generating new inequalities and introducing fragility into local livelihoods—most especially for women. For Gilberthorpe, it is only local-level analysis of 'unquantifiable factors such as kinship, descent and exchange patterns [that] can provide critical social explanations for the "resource curse"' (page 88). Gilberthorpe's attention to the disruption of long-standing obligations by new policy frameworks—whether imposed by the state or global norms of 'best practice'—has an analytical potential that is demonstrated in several other chapters. Farran describes how unsustainable logging in the Solomon Islands has been facilitated by an exploitation of the gap between law and 'customary' obligations toward land stewardship. Timber Rights Agreements thus create 'accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few without any counter-balancing distribution' (page 189). Shifting context quite considerably, Bouriaud and Marzano show that unsustainable logging in Romania is closely related to corruption and, once again, to the conflicting spheres of obligation created by state-level policy interacting with the patronage politics of 'local barons' and the 'contributions' to them that forest guards must make if they are to ensure their own livelihoods (page 230). It is this focus on the interaction between natural resource extraction and the unquantifiable dimensions of livelihoods—be they conceptual (as in the case of *sumak kawsay*), on the basis of economies of obligation, or related to apparent tensions that arise between the assurance of cultural continuity and the pursuit of economic opportunity—that makes Gilberthorpe and Hilson's collection unique. Likewise, it forms the thread that ensures the collection remains intelligible despite a geographical range that takes in Asia Pacific, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, the 'transition' economies of Romania and Russia, and 'developed' mineral-producing states including Canada, Australia and the USA. This collection should secure a significant audience among policy makers and students on emerging 'social business' degrees who are willing to critically examine the relationship between 'best practice' in the extractive industries and the unquantifiable dilemmas that beset indigenous communities confronted with large-scale resource developments.

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