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'Our own law is making us beggars': Understanding experiences of governed, mine-side communities in Mutoko district, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

There is rising interest in connecting global value chains with sites of extraction to ensure that mineral resources, wherever extracted, are governed to benefit communities. Despite commitments by policymakers and African intergovernmental bodies to governance that does not disenfranchise communities, voices of those affected remain peripheral to mining industry operations. In this article we ask how the extraction of black granite used in grand buildings in the West is experienced by mine-affected people in Zimbabwe's Mutoko District. We seek to bring forth voices of those affected by mineral extraction including its governance processes, to produce an account of mining anthropology rooted in Habermas's lifeworld concept. We show how communities continue to shoulder multiple burdens of black granite extraction without getting its rewards: Broken bridges, damaged roads, dirty air, hazardous living environments and loss of land are some of the key experiences. And the current governance regime characterised by outdated laws, dishonesty, and intimidation of the governed allows the burdens of black granite mining to perpetuate. In conclusion, we note how the marginalised lifeworld contains knowledge, capacity and experiences that must be fully accounted for in reshaping the governance of extraction for the benefit of mine-side communities.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwean black granite has been noted worldwide for its quality, and the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen is one of the grand public buildings constructed using this material. True to the political ecology literature on unequal ecological exchange (Bedford et al., 2020; Givens et al., 2019; Hornborg, 1998), Mutoko District, the region where the granite is produced, does not have a functional public library at all. The high quality of Zimbabwe's black granite fetches high prices on international markets (Bhoroma, 2019), which if managed properly could ensure the development of communities of extraction, even in the most basic ways.

Black granite mining in Mutoko District has for some time been a contentious affair due to the unequal distribution of the derived benefits, the environmental costs which mainly affect mine-side communities, and the way its extraction is governed. Taxes paid for the black granite have historically been low (Chigonda, 2010), erratically remitted, and centralization means barely any funds make it back to the District. Additionally, corruption, poor administration, mineral leakages, undervaluation, and speculative hoarding of mineral concessions plague mining within the country including black granite (Maverick Citizen, 2021). Consequently, local communities affected by mineral extraction across Zimbabwe, are characterised by poor public infrastructure, disturbances to livelihoods and resultantly high poverty rates (Gamu et al., 2015). Scholars on resource governance would label this the outcome of a classical natural resource curse (Auty, 1993) since comparatively districts in parts of Zimbabwe lacking mineral resources instead depending on agriculture, perform much better on the human development indicators (Magaramombe, 2010; Pérez and Claveria, 2020).

A diarised account by a local youth leader,[1] Makanda (2020), who experiences black granite mining daily, may serve as a critical voice and a window into this research:

> Villagers are being displaced with no meaningful compensation, youths are being employed as manual labour without even signing contracts and are being made to work for more than 12 h, yet they

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[1] Black granite mining has caused young people in the district to organise counter-development and civil development processes to improve living conditions of affected communities. Makanda is one of many such leaders.

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> are only paid for the legally stipulated 8 h. Can you imagine the camping sites doesn't have toilets and workers use the #BushSystem, and if the workers question their working conditions they are either fired or physically assaulted & if they get injured on the job it's one man for himself and God for us all because [there] is no Safety and Health Officer. […] This is how our Mining host communities are open for business. And if they dare challenge this status quo, prominent politicians from high up places will get involved and instruct them not to dare disturb the ongoing mining operations as this will be unapologetically met with the heavy stick and fist of the military.

The experiential account by Makanda presents a specific, grounded view of granite mining, a reflection on the lifeworld[2] and how large-scale mineral extraction viewed through the lens of unequal ecological exchange animates the lives of everyday people, despite visionary statements and mining agendas intended to improve conditions. In accounts such as this, community experiences remain rooted in poverty, loss of livelihoods, and environmental degradation. In this article, we continue to explore accounts of black granite extraction, and the governance that enables it, as experienced from below, by capturing perspectives of the governed whose lifeworlds are directly affected.

In the next section we explore theoretical perspectives on how to understand governance from below, followed by a brief contextual section. Following this we present three empirical sections before, finally, a conclusion on how voices from below may reanimate extraction away from the present unequal ecological exchanges.

2. Lifeworlds of the governed

Patterns of unequal exchange for minerals extracted from the Global South are not new but simply 'business as usual' (Kirsch, 2014). The era of neoliberal governance of the black granite sector in this sense helps reproduce and multiply patterns which follow historical developments that go back decades, if not centuries (Hornborg, 2020). In one investigation, Bhoroma (2019) followed the money trail of the black granite used in the construction of the new Danish Royal Library and found that the Mutoko Rural District Council (MRDC) was paid less than US$1 in taxes for every ton extracted by the mining companies and received less than US$45,000 in total. The mining company supplied an Italian architectural company at approximately US$223 per ton. Once the Italian company polished the black granite, it was sold to the library for a total US$9.12 million (Bhoroma, 2019). Thus, despite the prestige and incremental economic value derived from black granite along its value chain, one can see that it did not result in meaningful tax income to the District, let alone provided direct benefits to the people of Mutoko (Chigonda, 2010).

Taxation law enforcement in the mining sector is severely challenging and mining companies owe significant sums to government and District councils across Zimbabwe for minerals such as gold in Kadoma, diamonds in Marange and black granite in Mutoko Districts (Bhatasara, 2013; Kaseke et al., 2015; Mtisi et al., 2011). Reports from civil society indicate how powerful politicians who have invested in these ventures limit the tax payments. Between companies not paying debt and the undervaluing of natural resources to the District Councils, it is difficult to pinpoint which is the main problem. On one hand, mining companies refuse or default on payments, thereby limiting the fiscal capacity of the District and therefore the capacity to provide public services. On the other hand, the Districts are reportedly often locked in unending legal disputes over how much they should be paid. The unequal ability to win legal cases against mining companies confirms business as usual in the context of global unequal ecological exchange (Givens et al., 2019). Mtisi et al. (2011) report that Mutoko District produced 121,000 tnes of black granite in 2009 for which it was supposed to be paid US$12.1 million by the mining companies. However, the mining companies paid the District Council in total US$18,400, or 0.015% of the original sum. And this miniscule payment only occurred after a court order.

At an operational level, low or non-existing payments by mining companies[3] go hand in hand, with a corporate-government complex that enables unequal exchanges. Politicians in Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU PF party and top government officials are alleged stakeholders in the mining companies that extract black granite and other minerals.[4] These officials are mostly based in the capital Harare, their detachment and exogeneity to the local allows them to favour profits gained from extraction without worrying about the local consequences of extraction. Muchadenyika (2015) details 'mafia-like politicians' whose activities are synonymous with tax evasion, minimal payments below set rates and continued defaults on taxes even after being taken to court (Maverick Citizen, 2021).

Like many other resource-rich African countries, the challenges of governing mineral resources are unfolding in Zimbabwe, with changes most pronounced in communities of extraction who face the main environmental burdens (Ferguson, 2006; Hilson, 2009; Hilson and Maconachie, 2008). Economic, environmental, political, social, and institutional forces animating the extractive industry in Africa need to be better understood from the viewpoint of those affected, especially if these resources are to change the socioeconomic fortunes of the rural people who are attached to them. Black granite extraction in Zimbabwe has been the subject of a number of studies: Chigonda (2010) attempted to balance benefits against costs in Mutoko District. Bhatasara (2013) concluded that the sustainability of livelihoods was under threat due to land acquisition where black granite mining investments took preference over community perspectives. No author has yet to focus primarily on how local communities experience black granite extraction and its governance by capturing a bottom-up account of the mining. We seek to amplify community voices thereby showing new ways forward to improve governance for this long-running resource conundrum.

Kirsch (2014) and Herbert et al. (2002) highlight anthropological approaches to mining research. Though not applied in these works, the accounts indicate possibilities to interpret the Habermasian lifeworld and life conditions in large-scale extractive projects when voices from below become the focus. Habermas' lifeworld concept captures what is often taken for granted, the mundane daily and nuanced experiences that happen without noticing or consciously committing to them (Jackson, 2012; Kraus, 2015). Inspired by Habermas, there is a strong belief shaping this article that the natural resource economy in Mutoko District is not allowing the communities endowed with black granite to succeed and that the government is not earnest in its exchanges with the community. Habermas asserts the crisis of legitimation of social institutions and states, a crisis of perception by citizens that the actions of the government should be fair, just, compassionate, and in their best interests. It is upon these precepts that the issues surrounding black granite mining ought to be pursued in research untangling local lifeworlds.[5] The lifeworld is also, in short, a way to discuss cultural identity and livelihood needs in one concept. As the lifeworld is increasingly

[2] The lifeworld according to Husserl, (1970, p. 24) refers to the world as lived (by both individuals and collectively). Habermas develops this idea further to also mean the lived domain or realm made of both formal and informal, culturally grounded perceptions and mutual accommodations (Edgar, 2006).

[3] In mining taxation, it is common for authorities to face difficulties in both assessing a) the market value of an extracted mineral since such prices are often trade secrets, and b) measure the volume of extracted mineral in lack of scales and advanced chemical laboratories to determine weight and grade of a mineral in often remote, mining regions.

[4] A common practice also for other minerals in Zimbabwe (Mkodzongi and Spiegel, 2019; Muchadenyika, 2015; Spiegel, 2020), and internationally (Ferguson, 2006; Oskarsson, 2013).

[5] See Bebbington et al. (2008) for one example of research on how mining colonizes people's lifeworlds.

colonized when granite extraction expands, the range of possible actions by communities are increasingly marginalized to the extent that money and power dominate or control it (Habermas, 2015; Honneth and Joas, 1991).

Until a decade ago, black granite in Zimbabwe was classified simply as a natural resource, meaning it was not governed by the Mines and Minerals Act 1961 (Bhatasara, 2013; Mtisi et al., 2011). While the government hoped that the reclassification of black granite as a mineral would help in cascading its benefits at both the local and national levels, it remains to be seen how these benefits can permeate the local, relative to the costs incurred from extraction. In the light of this discussion, it appears likely that national and regional aspirations, such as the African Mining Vision (The African Union Commission, 2009), will fail if billions of dollars-worth mining economies continue to marginalize the communities where extraction occurs. While good governance and the capacity of institutions are by some authors thought panacea to mitigate against this failure (Preez, 2015), the voices from below, experiences of local communities are at present minimally considered when shaping mineral governance in Zimbabwe. By presenting how governance is experienced by local communities, we hope to locate the voices of the marginalised situated in their lifeworlds, possibly provoking new conversations from the bottom-up, and contributing to demarginalization processes necessary for local people whose lives are intertwined with mineral resources.

2.1. Research setting and methods

This article seeks to amplify the voices of mine-affected communities in Mutoko District in a context of long-term marginalization. amongst the authors is a native resident of Mutoko District allowing an understanding of local conditions, languages, and culture. This understanding was, however, mediated by assistants presently based in the District, and by technology due to the Covid-19 crisis which prevented travels. In total 21 interviews were carried out Jan-Mar 2021 with local community members and representatives of community-based organisations. Interviews were also sought from local administrators though these were not possible to obtain due to a lack of responses. All responses have been anonymised for ethical reasons including the exact locations of respondents across five mine-affected wards in Mutoko District.

Since the research was carried out during the Covid crisis, netnographic (Kozinets, 2006) representations and pre-existing local knowledge guided the research. Data collection relied on netnography (Kozinets, 2006) mediated by research assistants in Mutoko District to examine behaviours and situated meaning-making of mine-side individuals and groups (Van Maanen, 2011). According to Kozinets (2006), netnography can be seen as ethnography applied to online research settings, albeit in this research done with some differentiating characteristics. In this research, social media is a secondary civic space for discourses and communication on socioeconomic issues. Social media was closely monitored, with active participation in online webinars.

Mutoko District is located in Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe which contributes 75% of the nation's black granite production. The district is further sub-divided into smaller constituencies called wards made up of a combination of villages of up to a hundred households. Fig. 1 below shows a map of Mutoko district with its in total 29 Wards. Names of the places, mostly villages with historically relevant chieftaincy names are labelled within the wards. Agriculture is the mainstay of Mutoko's rural economy and with the ongoing mineral resources extraction, there is a pronounced presence of civil society driving civil education, triggering activism and sector-based advocacy surrounding mining. However, the activism does not imply preconceived, pro- or -opposing political views on mining. In fact, community activism is not about bringing about radical political-economic change but mainly seeks to improve the social and economic conditions left in disarray due to mining and other factors. Activism is in this sense mainly a search for viable livelihoods against tumultuous odds.

Five wards (2, 5, 7, 8 and 10) in Mutoko District (see Fig. 1) are directly affected by black granite mining by companies like Natural Stone, Ilford Red, Longrui and Digmao. These five wards are the main focus of this research. While Longrui and Dingmao are known to be Chinese-owned companies, Surewin, spelled by locals as Xua Win, raises speculation that it is also Chinese-owned. There is no clarity as to which companies have politicians as shareholders, and yet the government interest is seen when communities are in disarray due to the many changes brought on by extraction. One example of this is the account by Makanda (2020) which ends with threats of military force, used historically by the government to control communities and opposing voices in mining districts (see also Maverick Citizen (2021) and Spiegel (2014)).

2.2. Mineral governance in Zimbabwe

> The dominium in, and the right of searching and mining for, and disposing of all minerals, mineral oils, and natural gases, notwithstanding the dominium or right which any person may possess in and to the soil on or under which such minerals, mineral oils and natural gases are found or situated, is vested in the President, subject to this Act.

This is the opening section of the Mines and Minerals Act of 1961 [Chapter 21:05] in Zimbabwe. Part II, Section 26 of the same Act classifies two categories of land tenure arrangements that are open for mineral prospecting:

> (a) State land and Communal Land; (b) all private land in the title to which there has been reserved either to the British South Africa Company or to the Government of Zimbabwe the right to all minerals or the power to make grants of the right to prospect for minerals.

The two excerpts pinpoint dilemmas associated with the Act. Firstly, the Act vests the power of the President to control any land on or underneath which minerals are discovered in the entire country, including the communal lands occupied by approximately 70% of the population (FAO, 2021). Secondly, the prospecting clause makes all land in the country potentially open to prospecting for minerals, and if found, anyone can be made to vacate the land using the power of the President. This is reflective of a deeply entrenched colonial legacy that the country remains clutched to, as indicated by the fact that land reserved for the British South Africa Company (BSAC) is part of the Act's ambit. The Minerals and Mines Act of 1961 continues to govern the country's mineral resources based upon colonial premises giving the impression that the country simply internalised colonialism (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2008). One informant stated:

> If we are to prevail and succeed as black people, the law has to be amended so that benefits of development go to the people. The current law was designed to make us beggars to a resource that belongs to us. Imagine writing letters to ask and beg companies to put water in the cattle dip tanks,[6] at schools for children to drink when the resource is ours. Our own law is making us beggars. If it is changed, it will be us who will be asked for our resources instead. They should be asking us instead.

The informant's narrative of "black people" seems to imply that others, other than black, are benefiting from the resource at his expense. The feeling that the law has made him a beggar stems from a colonial past under the same law, which today is felt as upheld, albeit by a post-colonial government. There seems to be a strong understanding of the power residing in owning a rich mineral resource and enacting laws to

[6] Dip tanks are containers holding a solution of chemicals in which cattle get fully or partially immersed to control livestock pests, diseases, and vectors.

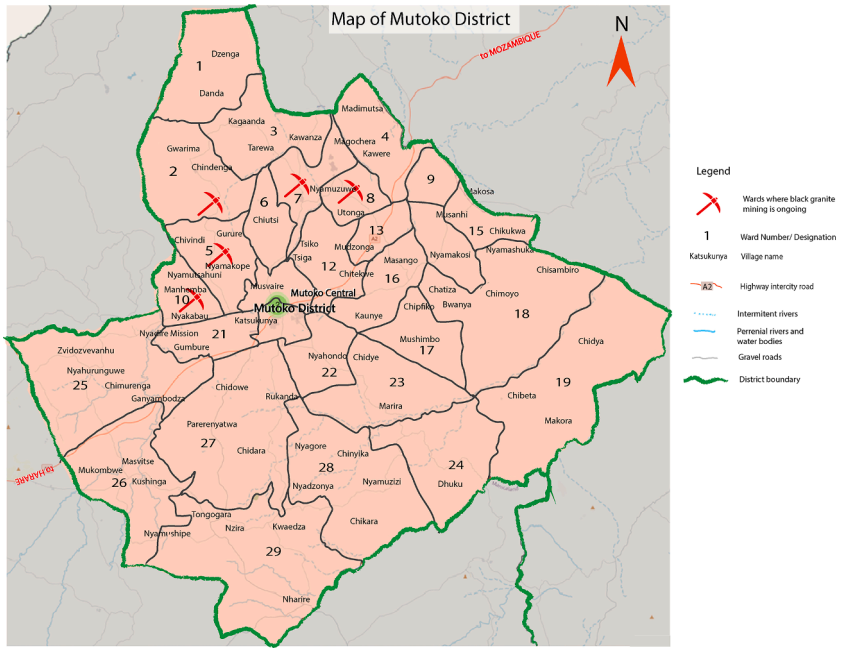

Fig. 1. Map of Mutoko District.

govern it better without disenfranchising those to whom a natural resource belongs. Another informant, a leader in civil society, further supports this, adding that the Mines and Minerals Act favoured investors over communities.[7]

> Remember we are talking of an Act from the year 1963 [1961], enacted by our colonizers who sought to benefit from our suppression. We have amended most of our acts and laws, but not the Mines and Minerals Act, up to now it is the law that is still being used. That law gives the miner or the investor the power to displace people, because that law almost supersedes any other law in Zimbabwe. So, if you are carrying out any farming activity, and there is a mineral found or discovered on the land, then mining takes precedence over any other activity or use of the land. My wish is that government moves to amend this act or repeal it altogether.

In addition to the Minerals and Mines Act, the Environmental Management Act is crucial for mineral governance. Its mandate is to ensure that "national economic, social, cultural and spiritual advancements" (Environmental Management Act, 2005) are safeguarded. Many problems have been cited by informants of this research regarding the work of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA),[8] one of which is the incapacity to fully enforce and execute its mandate. The agency has, for example, been implicated on several occasions in producing fake Environmental Impact Assessment reports (Gwimbi and Nhamo, 2016; Spiegel, 2017). One informant noted:

> On paper, governance is considered as ongoing, on the ground it is a totally different story. Because on paper, the government is cheating itself and its way into resources in communities. I should not say we have measures in place to protect us from the impacts of black granite extraction since they are not being followed. Measures are there on paper but lack implementation.

This section indicates creditable governance tools and structures, which, if enforced and capacitated, can aid communities to benefit from minerals extraction, or at the least protect them from harm. But a failure to turn paper governance into practical governance continues to haunt the people of Mutoko. The lack of implementation creates a rift of distrust between the lifeworld and the governance system which is viewed as an agent not to be trusted to serve the people's interests.

3. Experiencing lifeworld disruptions from black granite mining in Mutoko district

3.1. Black granite governance from below

Two immediately noticeable issues in black granite governance in Mutoko are its fracture and the absenteeism of government officials when the community needs them, especially in alleviating the negative impacts of black granite extraction. One community member expressed it this way: "Honestly, we are alone, government structures are there, but the governance is not there." Community members acknowledge that they do have government officials who are present locally, indeed some of them are even in their midst in the communities. And yet the sense of absent governance is justified when complaints never lead to action.

With crucial structures for mineral governance including local government official structures[9] put in place, it may sound contradictory to in this research discuss the absence of government. One interviewee acknowledged that there is a 'local' committee with representatives from different entities including government, civil society, the mining companies, as well as the community, to help address issues arising from black granite mining. However, he was quick to highlight that not even one person in the committee actually comes from the communities in Mutoko North, the constituency where black granite extraction occurs.

[7] Advocacy work by civil society groups has been ongoing for years to amend this law without tangible results.

[8] The Environmental Management Agency is the institution mandated by the Parliament of Zimbabwe to execute the Environmental Management Act.

[9] Like many African countries, Zimbabwe has committed to decentralization and its ten Provinces are further divided into Districts, then into Wards and Wards into Villages. The subdivisions are meant to ensure that governance reaches down to the local level with the help of Provincial Members of Parliament, Local Members of Parliament (for constituencies), the District Administrator, Ward Councillors, the traditional leadership including Chiefs at District level, and Headmen at Village level.

The interviewee submitted:

> I should warn you that we have a lot of placeholders in places of decision-making and the power is in Harare. Anyone in the community from committee members to the District council, they are just symbols of leadership.

It is in this manner, by and through government actions or lack thereof, that governance 'on the ground' may be understood as symbolic, signalling that local officials and committee members are simply filling up structures. This does not mean that government representatives are totally absent from the scene. During elections for example, according to one smallholder farmer, community members manage to register many issues regarding black granite mining to their MP. The farmer went on to defend the local MP saying that he tries his best to get those issues to parliament and that also his (the MP) field is filled with black granite residue from the nearby quarry. There is a subtle, yet important issue to be picked here regarding the lifeworld by those experiencing the state, that those who are external to it use and structure communication in such a way that it allocates them sympathy from within the lifeworld, despite being 'absent' and part of the system that does not necessarily experience that lifeworld.

Similarly to the accounts above, Bainton & Skrzypek (2021) allude to a phenomenon of contentious 'absent presence', a paradox which produces "a heightened sense of the state, with the presence of the state felt through its absence (2)". The state can thus be simultaneously present and absent, which holds true in extractive enclaves such as Mutoko District. This demystifies the absence of governance paradox as seen in actions of state representatives in Mutoko district. One such instance is that of the MP only availing himself to hear community needs during elections, seen by many as simply a campaign gimmick to garner votes, a commonplace feature in Zimbabwean politics where career politicians usually enjoy lifetime benefits.

Decentralized governance structures provide the institutional strength needed to effectively govern resources such as black granite. However, they can also be a weakness if not used or deployed appropriately.[10] Asked about who they report to when they have issues regarding black granite extraction six informants stated they report to the District Councillor, three to the Chief, two to their local MP, three to the District Council, two to EMA,[11] one to the village headman and one to the local committee. The remaining three respondents said they report to no one at all. According to one civil society leader, community members report to different people depending on the gravity of the situation. Locally, the first person to contact is the Village Head, then the Headman, then the Councillor and, finally, the local MP. One implication of multiple channels of authority is that an issue may go unaddressed. Some officials do not have sufficient power to make decisions on many issues and therefore merely refer to a higher official which deters complaints and grievances. In this view a structural fracture appears within the governance system with its many appendages incapable of making real decisions on the ground, as would be the ideal situation in a decentralized government that has effectively devolved power.

The claims of fractured governance run deeper than detailed so far. An additional dimension of the fracture emanates from the lack of capacity by key officials to carry out their duties. A respondent experienced the EMA's 'public secret', its lack of funding as well as lack of, in the words of the respondent, "capacity to really carry out that thorough monitoring of the granite quarrying activities that are happening in the mining communities." This includes a lack of human resources as well as not even having fuel to travel to often remote sites. At one point when our respondent engaged the EMA, "…they were saying they don't have enough vehicles that can enable us to visit each and every quarrying site to monitor whether or not they adhere to environmental stipulations."

Beyond the lack of resources, there are a lot of hurdles to overcome for voices from below to be addressed higher up the bureaucracy. At the same time, the bureaucracy can make decisions on behalf of communities without expecting to shoulder any consequences. One informant commented:

> When the companies are to get licences for their operations, they get [them] from the Ministry of Mines and [Mining Development in Harare], and usually this happens without the community being consulted. So, an investor can just go to the Ministry of Mines, and get a licence, and go straight to the quarrying site, without necessarily having to go through the community for consent. So, at the end of the day, you then have a situation whereby mining companies start to operate without the community [being] aware of this new development. That lack of community involvement, then, compromises the relationship between the mining company, the community, and the government.

The tension can be felt by Chief Mutoko, who was interviewed in Ward 10 for a documentary (Bustop TV, 2020). The chief registered his disappointment in companies coming from the capital with finalized and approved papers from the Ministry of Mines. Any visits to the mining area prior had been carried out without his knowledge to survey and confirm the mining claims later purchased from the government through the company Zimbabwe International Quarries (Pvt) Ltd.

Looking beyond governance fracture through a lens of discord amongst officials is also important. An informant stated that they asked the community leadership, mainly the Headman, the Chief, and the District Councillor to intercede on separate issues. But after going to the companies, they would not give the community any feedback. Villagers cannot go directly because the Chinese company employees refuse to talk with them. The community in Nyamutsahuni[12] sees their leaders as suppressing them. One informant went as far as alleging that the community leadership gets money from the mining companies because of the community complaints, a claim that may carry validity upon lifestyle audits. She went on to highlight this by saying, "[w]hen we complain and they intervene, sometimes you see them coming from the mining company offices with maize meal and other goods, so we are stuck we do not know who to turn to for help."

A grey area was left about the relationship between communities and the government. On the nature of this relationship, good, bad, or otherwise; one community member did not hesitate to say that they did not have a good relationship with the government:

> …for all the times that we have tried to reach out to the government to say we are having issues with the mining companies, they have done as if they want to help us but we have not seen anything changing or any form of compensation for what [damage] has already been done. You also realise that most of those whom we communicate our issues have little or more to do with the mining companies as well, they are benefiting from companies.

The significance of this submission cannot be underplayed for two key reasons. First, it echoes the absent nature of the government officials when communities need them. Second, it highlights one of the reasons that may explain the absence, which is the notion that government officials are benefitting personally from mining black granite, a scenario all too common in many geographies of extraction (Appel, 2014; Maunganidze, 2016; Muchadenyika, 2015).

The findings on governance reflect multiple internal conflicts within the government (the system according to Habermas), and between the

[10] According to Chikwawawa, (2019), decentralization attempts in Zimbabwe have historically occurred without devolution of powers.

[11] District Environmental Officials are accessible to communities.

[12] We include the village name here since its challenges have already been well-published and discussed in the public domain via the documentary by Bustop TV.

government and the governed (the lifeworld). However, the government is merely a fraction of the system, mindful that the mining companies make up another key part of the whole. The government-corporation complex that enables the current configuration of black granite produces dangers that Bainton & Skrzypek (2021) warn about regarding the blurring between 'state effects' and 'company effects'. We go further to claim that equally the lines become blurred on who to hold accountable for the extraction experienced in Mutoko, especially when company effects and state effects are indistinguishable, and the state is felt and experienced in the lifeworld mainly through its absence.[13]

Despite the government showing willingness to change through progressive, yet selectively applied laws such as the EMA Act,[14] the lack of will to change is also visible through the overall mineral governance framework which remains tethered to the country's colonial past. This echoes the struggles of law against law and ignites scholarly interests as well as developmental aspirations for resource governance that has been effectively decentralized and with sufficient capacity. Decentralization in this sense has the utmost potential to move from the phrased dishonesty and paper governance outlined here to a more inclusive model that may change how communities experience black granite extraction and the governance organizing it.

3.2. Lifeworld disruptions from mining

Black granite extraction in Mutoko District has been taking a serious toll on the built environment. As expressed by a mine-affected woman interviewed for this research:

> They damaged more than our fields, our houses in which we live, our toilets and buildings are severely cracked. You will not see anything else when you arrive at these homesteads except houses that are severely cracked.

Reports of cracked houses and buildings in the villages are all too common due to black granite extraction which involves a lot of blasting. Those residing closest to blast zones, as close as five kilometres are most affected by it. As we move further away from blast zones, the cracks on houses and other buildings become lesser and lesser. Women who were interviewed pointed out this challenge and having to invest in the same development repeatedly. One woman complained that when the mining companies blasted, the whole house would shake, including kitchenware and everything in the house, while movable small things, such as plates and cups sometimes fall to the ground. This means that if a family is privileged to continue with market gardening to earn an income, a significant part of the proceeds goes to replace damaged houseware and repair property.

One of the most common features of extraction is the vast amounts of debris or tailings it leaves in its wake. From the debris comes an array of environmental problems and hazards emerge. One of the most commonplace experiences is air pollution in the form of mining dust.

> During blasting, stones would fall from the quarry mountains and could drop anywhere. They would hit a house and the companies would say nothing. You cannot complain because they say if you notice that blasting is about to occur, do not travel or move around and if you do, it is a wrongdoing.

One key highlight is that the lifeworld and daily life of the people in Mutoko has to be adjusted around black granite mining processes. Activities that require mobility and outdoor presence (which are literally the norm for an agricultural community) are expected to come to a halt when blasting occurs. The pastures on communal lands have also been colonized by black granite mining and the safe outdoor environment is no longer safe according to a smallholder farmer:

> Then we have incidences of the quarrying companies extracting the black granite but also not rehabilitating the land that they have been extracting from. So, at the end of the day, you have open pits that are left uncovered, that then endanger the livestock, that then endanger the wildlife, that even endanger children.

The most common sight that greets you in Ward 10 and Ward 5 in Mutoko is that of huge cubic boulders of rocks scattered in fields that previously were cleared annually to produce staple crops such as maize and legumes. Fields that used to produce food for the community no longer bring them the same value due to black granite extraction because of competing claims for limited land, which mining won and continues to win. This is not surprising, according to one informant who stated that mining activities supersede any other activity on land:

> The year that I decided to come to my rural homestead, I arrived [home] to a field filled with stones. When I asked the widowed wife of my late brother who was still living on the land whether they had been compensated for the damages on our land she said that no compensation was issued. I used to grow maize here, I would get 20 bags or 15 bags from this soil. If you grew the soil well, it would give you good food if the rainy season was favourable. When we asked what we were going to get compensated for us to earn a living, I was given [$320] for my field.

Smallholder horticulture, which bloomed in the area in the early 1990′s made Mutoko a leading smallholder-led producer region for tomatoes in the country. Gravel roads were built with small and big bridges above streams to ensure that farmers would be able to transport their produce from their land to the highway, and from there on to the capital Harare. More than half of the people interviewed for this research engage in market gardening and for them damaged roads is a serious restriction. Roads of gravel are already prone to damage by rainwater, by heavy truckloads or anything that loosens the soil. Graders irregularly and erratically improve the road surfaces as the resources of the District Council permit. The poor road infrastructures increasingly put horticulture under threat.

In the lifeworld of the people in Mutoko, there is evidently more value to the communal land that the communities call home, beyond the material benefits that are protracted and often regarded as central to life in the community by the government. Thus, the land is embedded with identity, social values and relations, history, tradition, and culture which cannot be but are still conventionally overlooked by both the mining companies and the government in readjusting communities and the environment to suit the modern industrial mining complex. This thus is a cause for concern because it erodes securities of communities, in a lifeworld dominated by the privatization of resources through what Harvey (2005) terms accumulation by dispossession, a concern that the interviewees raised. As most voices from below show, communities are open to change but there are terms of change that they believe ought to be revered and honoured, especially in line with their culture.

A strong connection of people in Mutoko to their cultures, including values and identity persists, but remains under constant threat. The struggle for life, to put food on the table and a decent living often cause culture and values including identity, to be pushed to the periphery of the lifeworld. Specifically, the forced movements and displacements of people from their communal lands where they have historical connections by and through cultures, and via their ceremonies, comes into the fold. For communities in Mutoko, every traditional rural homestead is regarded as having an ancestral connection. Some family graveyards predate colonialism and are regarded as sacred, tying the past, present

[13] At the same time our respondents did not comment on hybrid forms of governance between modern and traditional approaches common among artisanal and small-scale (Ntewusu, 2018).

[14] Though the Act contains some progressive measures offering protection for mine-side people and the environment, it is not understood as progressive for its selective application to criminalise small-scale informal miners, pushing many out of gold and diamond (Spiegel, 2017).

and future together. Yet, many households have been cut off from these sacred ties, displaced to make way for black granite extraction.

3.3. The perpetuation of poverty and marginalization

Villagers in Mutoko District registered mixed feelings when asked for this research if they have benefitted from black granite extraction. Many felt as though they were obliged to register a certain benefit that they enjoyed as a result of black granite extraction. One villager mentioned that one of the benefits that extraction brought about to the community was that youth in the community in ward 5 have been employed by the mining companies, while those from ward 8 registered the construction of a building block for children's learning as the main benefit, and a signpost made of black granite at Nyamakope bus station as another. Ilfford, the company which extracts black granite in Ward 7, is seen as doing better than most in terms of transferring benefits of extraction to communities, with one villager citing that the company built a community hall at the local business centre.

A sense of unequal exchange and a mismatch between what is extracted and what is transferred to communities as benefits is very clear and apparent when one listens to what the communities listed as benefits from black granite extraction. Some other benefits that were registered include assistance with funeral arrangements for the deceased and the donation of meat to villages during national commemoration days like the National Heroes Day and the national Independence Day. However, there are also heavy-handed registrations of disappointments by communities who mentioned that the community did not benefit much from extraction, with one member citing that there are a lot of unfinished projects since mining commenced and that they took key resources and replaced them with something that did not match what they took away.

A community leader working in Wards 5 and 10 summarized the employment benefits stating:

> Alright, so the issue of benefiting, it is a very tricky question because there is meaningful benefiting and there is 'unmeaningful' benefiting. So, I would give you an example, right now in Xua Wing we are saying that the local people, they can get employment at the quarrying company, at the quarrying site, and we are talking about at most fifty people being employed at this site. But the local people that are being employed, one, they are the least paid, because what they only offer is manual labour and you do understand that manual labour is the least, poorly paid, right? So, that's the only kind of benefit that the people do get, but outside that, there isn't really any other meaningful benefit that we can say that the community is getting.

The bulky nature of black granite as a mineral requires economies of scale when extracting the hard rock. The distant capital with which it is associated causes it to be responsive to international markets, a truth that can be understood in both the context of mining capitalism and extractivism which enable the phenomenon that Hornborg (1998) calls unequal ecological exchange. According to Kirsch (2006), the same economies of scale governing extraction discourage mining companies to rectify pressures they exert on the environment while maximizing gains in the international markets. Communities ought to count on the government for effective environmental controls and standards when mining companies evidently lack the motivation to improve these standards, because standards come at a cost, taking from whatever profits the companies make. Communities as a result come to shoulder the true burdens of extraction as this section has shown. The burdens cut across the social, economic, environmental, and cultural domains in many ways that are fundamentally intertwined. It remains difficult to isolate some of these and describe them in detail in this research without overlapping the description of one into another. Research intent on amplifying voices from below has the potential to communicate experiences of communities.

4. Conclusion

The changes brought on by black granite extraction, and the ways in which mineral governance in Zimbabwe deals with them, to a large extent shapes the life outcomes of mine-side communities. The lifeworld gives a window into the circumstances of life, the daily struggles, visions, desires, and aspirations of people affected by different aspects of mining. We find that one of the most haunting features in Mutoko District is the docility of people at the margins, their conformity to new and emerging conditions imposed by extraction. The risks and harms of black granite extraction have become normalised to the extent that individuals are now 'used to' for example breathing dust, losing livestock and having degraded agricultural land. This normalization, naturalization, and conformity, lead to progressive losses that contradict the promises of the neoliberal mineral market trusted by governments as the panacea to underdevelopment. In these processes it is imperative to acknowledge the power of the law, the way it has been historically structured and continues to be enforced as a determinant of socioeconomic conditions. Encapsulated in the statement 'our own law is making us beggars', communities of extraction in Mutoko District rely on donor funds to get by, while mineral resources from the same area usher in socioeconomic development elsewhere, and enable the construction of grand buildings in the West. The continuation of this unequal ecological exchange demands renewed reflections, both academic and political.

Despite being ensnared in ongoing environmental and social hazards, the slow pace of degradation experienced in Mutoko District makes for much delayed, or no reaction at all, by the government as well as from mining companies. There is rarely public outcry over black granite mining such as those occurring when there are oil spills (Egbon and Mgbame, 2020), or when poisoning occurs from chemicals used in artisanal gold mining (Macheka et al., 2020), or when miners get trapped underground (Mabhena 2012;). Instead, the experiences of black granite mining on communities are treated as microeconomic. In the socioenvironmental domain in which the lifeworld plays out, all key elements of daily, social life including culture, beliefs, values, and identity appear as though they are without meaning and therefore side-lined by the government for the economically lucrative mining. And governance often conforms at enormous socio-environmental detriment. What enables and conditions this beyond dubious abdication, and the enmeshing of the corporate and the state as one, is that both remain foreign to the lifeworld of Mutoko District.

Companies and the government do not only appear, but also act external and foreign to the social context of extraction of black granite because they are to the greatest extent describable as exogenous. Their exogeneity affords them autonomy, a cushion, and shields them from the realities situated in the lifeworld shaped by their impositions on communities. While this may sound like a contradiction on the notion that the state is decentralized with some officials residing in the communities of extraction, the lifeworlds of the officials differ significantly from those of villagers at the margins who are without any positions of influence or political power, no matter how small, to command benefits from the exploitation of the mineral. Ironic as it may sound, the state-corporation complex is incapable of experiencing itself and this makes for a difficult position regarding willingness to improve the lives of those that experience the complex. Both the government and the mining company hold power and control over the resource, while most of the monetary as well as the use benefits of the resource are transferred abroad. Any aspect relating to the resource causes the entire lifeworld on the ground, to become malleable to imposed rules with often colonial antecedents, and transferred burdens of extraction without resistance. This influence rests on a powerful governance architecture, powered by a highly feared military force (Makanda, 2020; Muchadenyika, 2015; Scheper-Hughes, 1992). This form of governance is revealed in this research as shrinking spaces, both physical and social, available to communities to ask that the

resource be governed otherwise. It is the will of informants that black granite be governed locally to benefit the local first, yet this remains elusive.

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