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Title: Corporate social responsibility and community development in a mining region in India : issues of power, control and co-option

Year: 2019

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Ranta-Tyrkkö, S., & Jojo, B. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and community development in a mining region in India : issues of power, control and co-option. In S. Banks, & P. Westoby (Eds.), *Ethics, Equity and Community Development* (pp. 145-165). Policy Press.

Chapter 7

Corporate social responsibility and community development in a mining region in India: Issues of power, control and co-option

Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö and Bipin Jojo

Abstract

This chapter explores the context and practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in a mining region in Odisha, eastern India, with high levels of poverty, environmental degradation and exploitation of local people. It outlines the limited programmes of CSR offered by mining companies, which largely comprise provision of facilities and services (e.g. schools, health clinics, community buildings) with little attention to social and community development. The argument is made that a community development approach that genuinely engages and empowers local people is needed to work towards environmental and social justice. However, the dependence of the poorest and most stigmatised workers (Adivasis) on the companies for jobs would make this approach very difficult to implement. One of the ethical concerns regarding the current corporate social responsibility programmes in the region is whether they are genuinely about social responsibility, or merely a strategy to manufacture consent and advance corporate interests. The situation in Odisha raises ethical and political challenges relating to corporate power versus powerless workers; environment versus jobs; and corporate social responsibility versus community development and organising. The chapter draws from the authors' empirical work (interviews, observation, and textual material) at the mining region.

Key words: Mineral extraction, corporate social responsibility, indigenous people, community development, ethics

Introduction

“Earlier, not much care was taken about the local society. Now that awareness is there.”

This claim was made in an interview with the managing director of a large-scale iron mine in eastern India in January 2015, when he reflected back on his long experience in the Indian mining industry. While the claim encapsulates a long-term corporate trend, in India corporate involvement in community-level matters remains an issue of constant debate, even suspicion. Can corporate and community interests be complementary, and if so, to what extent, especially in cases where the corporate activity has negatively affected the health and wellbeing of local people? Whose interests are actually at stake – who, locally, is ‘the’ company, who passes as ‘the’ local people, and whose interests do not count? How do the mining companies implement their community development programmes under CSR, and how participatory are these programmes? Should social and community workers engage with corporations to get resources, such as funding and other assets for the actual work with people, and what kind of risks or compromises might that entail?

In this chapter, we discuss these dilemmas in the context of the mining area of the eastern Sundergarh district in the state of Odisha in eastern India. In spite of its context specificity, our case connects with universal themes regarding extractive industries, CSR, and community work and development. These include the deterioration of the local ecosystems and ecosystems-based livelihoods in regions of resource extraction, growing disparities and uneven power positions between those who benefit from extractive industries and those who do not, complexities of CSR in a multi-ethnic and hierarchical society, and the subordination of ‘extractive peripheries’ to broader political and economic structures and tendencies. Related to these issues, the particular, yet also globally commonplace feature of our case is that the resource extraction transforms an area that is home to indigenous people.

This chapter is grounded in Odisha on the two most easterly of the 17 blocks comprising the Sundergarh District, Koida and Lahunipada, which alone have around 60 mines excavating mainly iron ore. The data for the chapter were gathered collaboratively for the purposes of Ranta-Tyrkkö’s postdoctoral research, on the consequences of the mining industry for disadvantaged groups in Northern Finland

and Northern Odisha (Academy of Finland, 2014-2017) during two relatively short sets of fieldwork in 2015. Ranta-Tyrkkö first visited the area for 10 days in January-February 2015, continuing with a joint two-week fieldwork period with Jojo in October-November 2015. The fieldwork took place in the residential and industrial centres of Barsuan, Tensa, Koida (alternatively Koira) and their nearby junctions, all within a 20-30 kilometre radius of each other. The data consist of observations, interviews and casual conversations with a wide range of people. We talked with villagers (men and women), including casual labourers, truck drivers, teachers, priests, *sadhus* (holy men), past and present *sarpanches* (elected heads of village self-governments called *gram panchayats*), mine workers and managers, shopkeepers, medical practitioners, and government officers. We also visited six mines and/or mining companies, some of them several times. As part of the discussions, we always introduced ourselves and explained our affiliations and the nature and purpose of the research, including matters of confidentiality. Depending on the situation and wishes of the interlocutors, we recorded some but not all the interviews, relying mainly on hand-written notes made during and immediately after them. For the purposes of this chapter, extracts describing the corporate histories and CSR activities, the life of local people and their welfare needs, the situation of existing welfare services, the perceived environmental and other changes in the region and assumptions and wishes regarding future development have been thematically organised and analysed.

In what follows, we preface our case study with a brief review of community development and CSR in India and the underlying political and economic continuums that feature mineral extraction in Odisha. Thereafter, we focus on how the mineral extraction structures the mining region in question. We conclude the chapter by highlighting the role of CSR and the challenges of community development in the absence of other investment into the region.

Community development in India

Development, as a notion defining the work with communities, emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War, when newly independent India “was pulled into the train of development”, being from the outset identified as ‘underdeveloped’ and a

'third world' country (Kuruville, 2005, p. 44). Development was assumed to occur through a similar trajectory of economic growth in all societies, also in countries like India impoverished by colonial rule. Later on, understanding of development as a complex set of processes has grown more nuanced (e.g. Healy, 2008, pp. 52-63). While it has maintained its position among the central concepts to think about societies and change, criticism has mounted, for example, against the violence made in the name of development and the idea of progress at its core. This is particularly pertinent in cases of development-induced displacement by industrial or infrastructure projects (in the Indian context, see e.g. Mathur, 2008; Meher, 2009; Nathan & Xaxa, 2012; Padel & Das, 2010; 2014).

While social and community development programmes have often succeeded in improving the welfare of people, critics doubt whether development in general can be adjusted to get it 'right'. For example, Padel, Dankerar and Unni (2013) criticise 'development' as too often distorted and overly materialist, calling for non-predetermined dialogue on what good and desirable life is about and how to achieve it in sustainable and just ways. Pratap and Priya (2009) further emphasise that such dialogue entails listening the views of the 'marginalised majorities', namely those labelled as 'uncivilized', 'underdeveloped', or 'wrong thinking'.

In India, community-based projects were experimented with as a way to improve people's wellbeing already before independence. Later on, the five-year plans introduced new ideas to community development reflecting prevailing political and ideological currents. Nevertheless, Jha's (2016) retrospective analysis is that throughout decades, the community development programmes failed to address the deep-rooted inequalities prevalent in Indian society. Instead, they entertained a "homogenised and totalising concept of community", discarding the central dividing lines of Indian society, such as caste, class and educational differences. Moreover, they constructed communities and their members as passive objects, not as thinking and acting subjects remarkably differently situated in terms of power and powerlessness (Jha, 2016, pp. 70-71).

More political and identity-based approaches to community mobilisation strengthened from 1970s onwards, especially within leftist and Dalit ('untouchable')

movements, with increasing awareness of the historical and structural foundations of the present inequality. While not always successful, disadvantaged groups have from time to time succeeded in reconceptualising and positively asserting their identities and mobilising around issues of displacement, rights and entitlements. Meanwhile, it has become clear that dominant castes and classes will not renounce their taken for granted privileges of their own accord. Moreover, the shift to neoliberal economic policies and the consequent privatisation of public companies and resources, together with weakening state intervention in social welfare, have had negative effects for India's disadvantaged communities (Jha, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility in India

When corporations are involved in 'community development' or community-based service delivery, their activities usually fall under the conceptual umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR), "responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society" (CII, 2013, p. 7). More critical views (such as in Padel and Das, 2010, p. 54) define CSR as "covering up the damage corporations cause to society and environment and maintaining public cooperation with the corporate dominated system". In India, CSR builds upon the earlier traditions of corporate philanthropy and industrial and occupational social work. Overall, the shift to CSR as a distinct approach has been gradual and slow and the concept remains vague (CII, 2013, p. 7; Sarkar, 2008, p. 36). Common thematic areas covered by the companies include health, education, environment and community development (Bhansal, Khanna & Jain, 2018, pp. 45-46).

CSR in India is currently in rapid transition. A recent major change, brought by the Companies Act 2013, in force from April 2014, is that all major companies have to spend a minimum of two per cent of their average profit, based on previous three years, on CSR. The major companies include those with an annual turnover of INR 10,000 million (roughly 145,000 USD) or more, net worth of INR 5 billion (around 72,700,000 USD) or more, or a net profit of INR 50 million (around 727,000 USD) or more. While the Act thus binds the largest companies only, according to Sarkar (2008, p. 31) at stake is a broader shift regarding the goals, objectives and priorities of CSR. The business community is now geared to think of CSR as "a company's

commitment to its stakeholders to conduct business in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner that is transparent and ethical” (DPE, 2013). Further, CSR is increasingly conceived as a business management concept integral to the corporation’s core business strategy and potentially a great business proposition (Sarkar, 2008, p. 39). In 2015, Indian mining companies were still developing their ways to respond to the demands of the new Act. The all-India sample-based assessment of Bansal et al (2018) shows that 52% of the eligible companies did not yet report their CSR expenditure in 2014-2015, and that the actual CSR expenditure was about 38% of the total expected.

Specific to the mining industry, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015 (renewing the 1957 Act) further requires that state governments have to establish District Mineral Foundations (DMFs), which the mining companies have to fund. The task of the DMFs is to work in the interest of the persons and areas affected by mining related operations. State governments give guidelines for the work, for example, by funding schemes that implement developmental and welfare projects and programmes in mining affected areas, or minimise and mitigate the adverse impacts of the mining industry. Separately from the DMFs, there are also unused funds accumulated from the compensations paid when forestland has been cleared for non-forestry purposes (e.g. mining) under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). During our fieldwork in 2015, the idea of the DMFs was yet so fresh that their organization and governance was unresolved.

Politics of mineral extraction in Odisha

Odisha is rich with forests, hydropower and mineral resources, but ranks as one of the poorest states of India. Notwithstanding significant minerals based economic growth during last decades, Odisha has India’s largest proportion of people living below official poverty line, around 28 % versus the all-India average of 15 % (Behera, 2016, pp. 31-32). Odisha’s poverty is explained by the state’s underdeveloped subsistence-oriented agrarian sector, weak industrial base, mass unemployment, and repeated natural catastrophes. What is more, Odisha’s development has been socially and regionally extremely uneven, benefiting cities

and wealthier coastal areas, but leaving rural areas, where more than 80 % of the population resides, marginalized and with poor infrastructure (Adducci, 2013, p. 181; Dayal et al., 2014, pp. 1-3).

The Government of Odisha has prioritized mining and industrialization with policies conducive to investment from India and abroad to infrastructure and industrial projects that are based on harnessing the state's natural resources (Mohanty, 2014, p. 39). For example, the Government of Odisha has promoted the state as the metals, mining and infrastructure hub of India (IBEF, 2015), and publicised big mining and industrial projects as a necessity if Odisha is to rise from its current underdeveloped state to prosperity and welfare (Mohanty, 2014, p. 44). On one hand, Odisha's minerals based growth strategy has succeeded in that especially the extraction of iron and bauxite has multiplied, as also has the minerals based revenue of the state. In early 2018, there were 624 mining leases in Odisha (GOO, 2018), 142 of them in Sundergarh District (for full list of companies and other details, see DMF Sundergarh, 2018). On the other hand, the strategy has failed to bring welfare to socially and economically marginalised groups. Instead of wealth trickling down, Odisha has become known as a place of growth with no inclusion (see Padel & Das, 2014).

Odisha's commercially most attractive mineral resources are largely located in the homelands of Adivasis, 'original inhabitants', who in India are also known as 'tribal people' or 'Scheduled Tribes', and who are commonly considered as Indigenous peoples. In India, the terms 'Adivasi' and 'tribal' are interchangeably used. The former asserts a positive identity, the latter carries legacies of colonial, evolutionist anthropology. In postcolonial India, the evolutionist and orientalist discourse is alive: 'the tribals' are still today often marked as uncivilized and unmodern, and thus lacking and hierarchically lower (Rycroft & Dasgupta, 2011; van Schendel, 2011, pp. 19-20). According to the 2011 Census, there are 104 million Adivasis in India, which is 8% of the population and makes India's indigenous population the largest in the world. While the official stand of the Government of India is that there are no indigenous people in the country (e.g. Shah, 2010, p. 10; Rousseleau, 2013), India acknowledges the special status and distinctiveness of Adivasis with educational and administrative quotas, reserved seats in government bodies, and protective

legislation. The latter includes the fifth and sixth Schedules of the Constitution, the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, and the Forest Rights Act, 2006, which in principle ensure Adivasi participation and say in decision making and right to land especially in the ('Scheduled') areas with an Adivasi majority. In reality, the implementation of the legislation is often poor.

The Adivasis of Odisha (numbering just over nine million, 22.1% of the state's entire population of 42 million, see 2011 Census) have mostly lived in small communities in geographically relatively inaccessible regions, relying on the forests for their subsistence. With the increasing competition over land and forest resources, they have suffered disproportionately from various industrial and infrastructural projects causing displacement and loss of traditional livelihoods, and jeopardising their community structures, cultures and identities. Mainstream society accords Adivasis a low status, and disrespect for Adivasi rights and encroachment on their lands by corporations and local elites is commonplace (see Padel & Das, 2010; Mohanty, 2014; Behera, 2016). Adivasis have been structurally disadvantaged via disinvestment in their education and health, discrimination in the labour market and general disinterest and inability to understand them and their views. More than 90% of the Adivasi families of Odisha live below the poverty line (Behera, 2016, pp. 31-32).

Communities and their relations in eastern Sundergarh

Sundergarh is a 'Scheduled' District with an Adivasi majority, its eastern part being originally home to Pauri Bhunia and Munda Adivasi communities. However, when large-scale mining in the region started with the construction of the Barsua Iron Mine (in operation since 1961) and the adjunct railway line, these communities were scared of outsiders and largely withdrew further into the forest. As they did not pick up the low-skilled mining jobs available, other Adivasi labourers already accustomed to wage work and contacts with outsiders moved in from other parts of Odisha and the neighbouring Jharkhand (then Bihar). As a result, nowadays the Adivasis of eastern Sundergarh have diverse origins from 'locals' to 'migrants'. The constellation of the people in the region has further diversified with (non-Adivasi) retail traders,

public sector professionals, mining engineers, and others working in (connection with) mines from all over India.

The Adivasis worked initially as unskilled manual labour inside and outside mines. As mining has become heavily mechanised, today the low-skilled jobs available are sub-contracted and comprise driving ore trucks between mines and the railway line, or loading the ore manually into train carriages. Illustrative of the salary level and conditions, in 2015 a truck driver working minimum of 12 hours per day, 7 days a week, earned approximately INR 6,000 (around 87 USD) per month. Access to even basic education being a relatively new thing for most Adivasis, they rarely qualify for other jobs. Having until recently relied on the forest for every need, many do not yet reckon the value of education, and even those motivated lack resources and support. The few skilled Adivasi workers employed in the mines do not necessarily earn much more than drivers or loaders, but their jobs are securer and give access to club-like benefits, such as company sponsored housing, health care, and schooling for children. A common denominator for the tiny better-off section of second or third generation migrant Adivasis with good jobs or small enterprises is usually a father or grandfather, whose regular job in a mine enabled piling social, economic and educational capital for the next generation.

The highly educated professionals in the mines or in the university degree demanding public sector jobs are usually non-Adivasis from outside, as are majority of transportation and logistics entrepreneurs, retail traders and the few of private mine owners. While some of these people form the top elite of the region, they rarely have their families with them, the explanation being that the widespread pollution and the poor educational and health care facilities make the place unsuitable for families. Professionals, who could improve the situation, are not interested to work in the region for the same reasons. In 2015, none of our interlocutors could recall a single NGO working in the region. Besides existing CSR practices, most people had no clue what social work or community development stand for.

While the relations between different groups seemed easy-going on the face of it, there were undercurrents of discontent. We heard, for example, recurrent accounts of Adivasis being stripped of the benefits to which they were entitled, or paid only

fractions of the promised or official salaries. A common view was that non-Adivasis cleverly cash in on whatever structural advantage they have and the subsequent inability of the Adivasis to compete. Unaccustomed to fight for their rights, the Adivasis remain silent when misconduct or injustice occurs. In eastern Sundergarh, access to justice is further complicated by the subdued, yet still existing Naxalite (so called Maoist, anti-state guerrilla movement), whose presence labels the region, like other potential Naxalite areas, as a dangerous and even a no-go place. Although the movement is more active elsewhere in Odisha, its existence has validated the operation of central security forces and the state armed police in the region. In these circumstances, the survival strategy of ordinary people is to avoid attracting unwanted attention by fighting their own corners. Moreover, Adivasis, and poor people in general, lack knowledge and financial resources to progress their cases through the courts. What is more, money talks, with unwanted criticism silenced by simply paying the criticism off or through violence. All this results in the poor having only each other to rely on. Thus, they sort their problems by sitting together and collectively figuring out if there is something they can do, a practice also in line with traditional Adivasi self-governance.

Environmental impacts and welfare needs

As a hotspot of mineral extraction, life in eastern Sundergarh is subservient to the mining industry. The region is brown and shabby because of the iron dust everywhere, which spreads not only from the mines, but also from the uncovered trucks that transport the ore. Rainwater carries the dust to the remaining fields, where it spoils the fertility of the soil and impairs animal health. Bigger quantities of iron, brought by monsoon run-off waters from the mines, make the soil sticky and unsuitable for cultivation. Mining wipes out the forest and disturbs the animals, making hungry, wild elephants come to villages in search of food. Overall, as one interlocutor said, "There is an imbalance of the earth; its equilibrium is lost".

After nearly half a century of large-scale mining in the region, the necessary infrastructures for people remain poorly developed. The incessant heavy traffic destroys the main roads, which are under constant repair, whereas villages a few kilometres apart from them commonly lack proper connectivity. While there are a few

under resourced government schools, some elders receiving old age pensions, and some government schemes patchily in place (such as the integrated child development scheme and distribution of food grains at subsidized price for people under poverty line), overall the level of public services is meagre.

The locals have no alternative but to adjust, for their lives depend on the precarious mining related employment. In so doing, they suffer from lung diseases, other health hazards due to pollution, the locally endemic severe malaria (which according to locals goes together with mining), diabetes, and traffic and other accidents. What is more, alcoholism is widespread and generates a number of other problems. Locals say that while alcohol has always been part of the Adivasi culture, it has turned into a major problem only with the advent of the mining industry. Many feel that alcohol gives a moment of solace from the taxing work and believe it buffers the body against the dust, and so consume their salaries on alcohol, neglecting the needs of their family members. This hits women and children particularly hard who unlike earlier, when it was possible to earn money with non-timber forest products, depend nowadays solely on their male breadwinners. Ironically, with mining jobs being for men, the only feasible source of income for women may be making and selling rice beer. At the same time, the inflow of lone men to the mining jobs has changed the gender composition of the region. Taken together, the shifts in the modes of production, the environment, and gender relations have brought new kinds of vulnerabilities for both men and women.

When asked in 2015 what the welfare needs of the region are, everyone from the poorest labourers to the managing directors of mines listed similar things: properly running primary schools, opportunities for further education, better coverage and quality of health care services, better roads. Nearly as unanimously wished for were pollution (especially dust) control, ways to curb alcoholism and peripheral development, including the need to develop livelihoods other than mining. Poorer people further addressed the need for better housing (with electricity, toilets and access to safe water) and generally services that the poor can afford. Many (rich and poor alike) also acknowledged the importance of just salaries and proper compensations for those who lose their lands to mining, and the importance of political empowerment.

Corporate responses

As previously discussed, in the absence of serious government as well as NGO interest to develop the region, community-level welfare investment in eastern Sundergarh rests largely upon the resource allocation by the mining companies. All the mining companies that we visited were middle-sized or large, and financed numerous CSR activities. In the companies, CSR issues were assigned to one or more white-collar workers in the company administration, but could also be negotiated directly with the CEOs. The company representatives described the CSR activities with a wide array of terminology, including community or peripheral development, but without referring to any particular theoretical foundations regarding CSR. In practice, however, CSR was another name for community investment, that is, financing infrastructure, its maintenance, and educational (teacher salaries, vocational training) and health care services (e.g. health camps) to the local villagers. In other words, CSR meant financial support, or, as one company representative said, “sponsoring basic needs in the periphery”.

Illustrative of the common CSR activities, according to its own reporting one of the largest mining companies in the region had spent annually (2012-2015) between INR 5,800,000 (around USD 84,000) and INR 8,400,000 rupees (around USD 122,000) to CSR. These figures covered annually the salaries of 17-26 temporary/para teachers in the local schools, sponsoring 25-70 youths to vocational training, and financing medical camps in several villages. Moreover, the company had funded numerous construction works from boundary walls and tube wells to a community centre and a cement road to a village, as well as electrification projects (of a community centre, electrical connections to those below poverty line in one village, a transformer in another village). Costs that were more miscellaneous included, among other things, renovations of water tanks, teaching aids to schools, chairs and a steel almira to a women’s association, provisions to sports and culture, and income generation schemes (mushroom cultivation, goat rearing, fruit orchard, each in one village). These figures come from the CSR expenditure reports of the company given to the authors in 2015.

As the previous example shows, while many of the sponsored activities involved hiring personnel, such as construction workers, electricians, or medical professionals, they were not really about community organizing or community development in the broader, more participatory and political sense of the term. While some targets of sponsorship, like teacher salaries, were fairly established, others were negotiated based on what people with some connection to the company's leadership proposed or what those in charge of CSR saw sensible. There was not necessarily any community-based process behind the CSR decisions, although some community representatives, like *sarpanches*, were sometimes involved in selecting the beneficiaries. Although the companies claim to "support what people like", much thus depends on who asks for the support and how.

Moreover, companies concentrate their funding on localities where they would like to expand or have interests to secure, but neglect areas where there is not much to achieve. In 2015, two mining companies competed with each other in the favours done to local residents close to mineral deposits that both companies desired. One small hamlet was provided with numerous water posts with company logos, a fruit orchard and even streetlights – a rare sight in a poor Adivasi locality. The neighbouring bigger village had several recently constructed community halls. Overall, there was both significant overlap as well as blind spots in the corporate service distribution and community investment, and lack of coordination between companies.

There is no shortage of targets for sponsorship, but the companies "cannot manage everything". Their CSR budgets are limited, and the bigger the company the more likely its CSR policy is set at the head office and not locally, which limits the generosity of sub-branches. Moreover, while it may seem only fair that companies finance infrastructure and services for local people, the effects of CSR are not only positive. A common downside of CSR is that it in effect boosts a charity-based approach to welfare instead of building broad-based inclusive welfare structures (see Padel & Das, 2010, p. 539). In eastern Sundergarh, even the corporate representatives constantly pointed out that the government should also take responsibility over the area and its people, and that government investment in the region was not commensurate with the revenue from its mines. On the whole, if

welfare investment rests chiefly on the mining companies, it is patchy and directed by corporate interests. This means that it has continuity only as long as it makes sense from the perspective of the core business, the exhaustion of the subsoil resources. Corporate interest in a mining region does not last forever and thus the CSR activities rarely aim to be particularly far-reaching and comprehensive, and therefore are not sustainable.

Whose development?

From a community development perspective, crucial questions regarding CSR policies are who formulates them, on what premises, and whom do they ultimately serve. Besides the usual scope for the use and abuse of power in a hierarchical and unequal society, welfare programmes in Adivasi regions, especially when designed and implemented by non-Adivasis, risk to being out of their depth in understanding the Adivasi cultures and worldviews. Overall, official and mainstream constructions of reality fail to grasp the standpoints of Adivasis, and the reasons behind their continuous marginalization (Padel and Das, 2014.) Sometimes the clashes between the modern developmentalist and the Adivasi worldviews are so insurmountable that subtle forms of Adivasi resistance are interpreted as idleness or backwardness. If, for example, Adivasis do not appreciate programmes that have been planned for but not with them, it is usually the Adivasis and not the planning processes that are seen as faulty (Kraemer, 2014, pp. 321-333). However, solutions that do not understand or mind the complexity and sophistication of the Adivasi relationships to each other and the land reflect first and foremost “the developers’ self-image and worldviews” (Fauset, 2006, cited in Padel and Das, 2014, p. 51).

According to Padel and Das (2014, p. 49), the key problem in the implementation of projects of Adivasi development is that what actually happens differs fundamentally from what is supposed to happen. In reality, there is usually very little correlation between the avowed benefits of the mining industry and the lives of the majority of the people in the mining regions. Much of the ‘development’ in industrialised Adivasi regions has been simply destructive (Padel and Das p. 66), the Adivasis in them being “among the most impoverished in India” (Padel and Das, 2014, p. 54). Moreover, their personal freedom and quality of life, as along with the quality of their

living environment, have significantly decreased (Padel and Das, 2014, p. 51). In eastern Sundergarh, the common assumption is that in the end, mining will totally spoil the natural environment and people will have to move elsewhere.

In Sundergarh and beyond, rampant nepotism and corruption further undermine pro-poor change taking place. If on the one hand nearly everyone with an opportunity to do so is primarily concerned with personal gain, the interests of subaltern groups remain forever secondary. Corporations, on the other hand, compete in the neoliberal global economy, which drives them towards ever-greater cost effectiveness, such as increased mechanization and trimming the efficiency of their labour. While resource extraction may thus generally increase the socio-economic well-being of the nation (Behera and Basar, 2014), in extractive peripheries this is rarely the case. On the contrary, “development process that alienates the tribes [Adivasis] from their resources marks the continuity of a historical injustice” and mocks the terminology associated with development, such as sustainability, participation and people-centeredness (Behera and Basar pp. 21-22). As one of our interlocutors succinctly said: “the Adivasis are simply used” and “getting lost”. In such circumstances, there is a limit to corporate and community interests being complementary. While the patchy community investment serves the companies, manufacturing the necessary consent for their activities, it also maintains the structurally disadvantaged position of poor Adivasis.

The previously described situation is likely to continue as long as development is defined primarily in material terms, while its costs to the environment, the less privileged people and the future generations are ignored, and attempts to challenge the status quo are subtly or more overtly suppressed. The mainstream attitude in India, even if not necessarily hostile to Adivasi rights to land as such, is that the rights of the few – such as the relatively small Adivasi communities in resource rich locations – should not hinder the economic development of the country. The fact that most fruits of development fall to groups already privileged, and that those struggling to survive day in day out have to stick to dangerous and exploitative work, goes largely unchallenged. For the poor, the equation is clear: “if there is no work, there is no food”. At the bottom of the precarious labour market, mining-related jobs are what people know, and financially they beat other options available. Nonetheless, people

are aware that mining-related work lasts only as long as there are minerals to extract and that low-skilled job like loading or driving may be gone much before that. For the moment, the potential resistance is therefore against further mechanization of the mineral transportation, not the extraction itself.

Avenues to change

The relations between humans, as well as between humans and the nature, contain always some fluidity and potential for surprises, and can be consciously worked on. Notwithstanding the earlier discussed complexities, community development in eastern Sundergarh is not rocket science. The basic starting point would be encouraging and allowing the Adivasis themselves define what they want and what development means for them, learning from them, and supporting them in their aims. This implies taking seriously the principle of Adivasi communities' participation in all planning and decision making processes relevant to them. Another important step would be respecting and putting it into practice the existing legislation concerning Scheduled Areas and Adivasi rights. However, as the previous discussion attests, aspiring towards greater social and environmental equality in the region is a fragile project. The disadvantaged position of the Adivasis and the cheapness (Moore, 2017) of their environment benefit powerful stakeholders backing up the status quo. Even so, there may be ways to alter the social and environmental realities on the ground.

The position of disadvantaged groups rarely improves without significant political pressure. Improving the position of the Adivasis will thus likely to require broad-based mobilization of the Adivasis, as well as their allies; the same holds true for other marginalised groups in India. While there are complex structural and personal reasons why some end up choosing violent struggle as part of the Maoist/Naxalite movement, from a community development and social justice perspective violence is a highly problematic path. Instead, there is an urgent need for peaceful, constructive Adivasi empowerment. Among other things, this requires identity and meaning making work in the Adivasi communities and beyond so as not to reproduce further the unequal power relations structurally in society or in the everyday relationships between people. If the ownership of the mobilization process remains in Adivasi

hands, their communities may benefit from various forms of encouragement, support, and facilitation. In these ways, community development can play a role. In mining regions, the task is no less than ensuring the fair treatment of the local communities, and the ecosystems affected by mining operations. The work requires capacity to understand and work on issues of power, without undermining the complexities of the context (Ross, 2013, pp. 193, 200).

Community development is about communities finding strategies to secure and protect what is important for them, while also envisioning how to pursue the kind of changes they seek. Such processes entail, for example, community level analysis on the challenges at stake, and discussion about what people dream about and what they hold realistic for themselves and their children. In spite of the current centrality of mining-related jobs, taking care of the natural environment is in Adivasi interests. In 2015, notwithstanding the bleak predictions about the environment of the area, many Adivasi interlocutors emphasised the place to be their home, where they want to live and die. In one village, the main concern of the villagers, many of whom worked for the mines, was the restoration of their fields into cultivable land after the damage caused by flash floods from the mines. These villagers emphasised that agriculture is what they have to sustain themselves with once the mining is over. However, besides practices of recycling (one mine) and environmental monitoring, there were hardly signs of corporate attempts to take care of the region's natural environment and its regeneration.

After all, the marginalised Adivasi communities could benefit from various practical community development efforts, provided these are realised from beginning to end in collaboration with them. Instead of 'mere' community development, there is a need of Adivasi centred community development and/or social work, which takes the Adivasi worldviews and values, and not the mainstream cultural values, as the starting point (see Ranta-Tyrkkö and Jojo 2017). At a minimum, community workers, whether or not themselves Adivasis, should be alert not to reproduce mainstream hegemonic and discriminating ideologies in their practice. Simple as this may sound, it is something in which the local labour unions have not succeeded. Instead of providing a platform to fight discrimination at work, our interlocutors' unanimous experience

was that the unions, which were all ruled by outsiders, enforced class and ethnicity based divisions and generated disputes and disunity.

What kind of community workers could then support Adivasi-centred community work, and where does CSR stand in all this? The Adivasi-centred, empowerment-oriented approach could be introduced by any potential community organizer, be s/he activist, ambitious public sector worker, community worker, social worker, or NGO worker. At the same time, the Adivasis are also likely to benefit from and need international solidarity for their case, although that may be a mixed blessing in terms of participation and ownership of the cause. However, notwithstanding the apparently genuine community service aspirations of many corporate officers in charge of CSR programmes, the social justice line of community development is hardly in corporate interests. Having until now provided mainly small-scale material help and services in the midst of constantly marginalizing processes, politically empowering work carries the risk of leading to demands of better salaries and working conditions, and even questioning the corporate activity overall.

While corporations in eastern Sundergarh certainly continue to have a role in community service and infrastructure delivery, there are thus limits to the community development dimension of their CSR programmes. Should the corporations want to broaden their approach towards community development, they would need to enhance their skill and willingness for genuine dialogue with the local communities, and openness to criticism. If this is not the case, corporate 'community development' risks remaining at the level of sporadic and paternalistic community investment that simultaneously serves as a neoliberal tool to maintain the local consent for the extractive activity. Although it would be very challenging to do so, overall, there is a need for independent, pro-Adivasi actors to undertake community development and community organising in this area. More important than their mode of organizing is that their mandate is based in, and complies with, the interests of the local marginalised communities over those of their donors or employers (for a critical account about NGOs, see Padel and Das, 2010, chapter 18).

Concluding with a critical note

To summarise, eastern Sundergarh is a region where mineral extraction has been going on for a long time, and where the consent of the local communities was never requested. Having served as a source of minerals and resultant profit ever since, much has been lost beyond repair environmentally and culturally. Meanwhile, the promise that mining based industrialization brings welfare to poor Adivasis has largely failed. Rather, the mineral extraction made some people move away and others move in, thus complicating the communities' sense of belonging and rights to the place. While mining has brought jobs – one of the main justifications of mining in an Adivasi region – the best jobs have gone for educated people from outside, leaving the (now second or third generation) poor Adivasis with the bottom rank, insecure, sub-contracted jobs. Furthermore, mining has eaten away land and deteriorated the ecosystems, superseding other livelihoods and making everyone suffer from the mining-related pollution. Yet, mining being the main source of income for the local people, there is no opposition to it beyond occasional dissident voices. If the poor communities become more outspoken and empowered, the currently underlying tensions, especially regarding the prevailing dynamics of power, could unravel in some form.

While the existing CSR programs are much needed in the absence of anything else, they hardly exemplify community development comprehensively understood. Remaining at the level of community investment, they cover up some of the damage caused while maintaining public cooperation with the corporate dominated system (for a broader account, see Padel and Das, 2010, p. 540). More responsible and empowering attempts would require addressing and finding ways to combat the structural oppression and discrimination that poor Adivasis experience on a daily basis, their mining related jobs included. Further, noting the deterioration of the natural environment because of the mineral extraction, instead of mere utilization, desperately missed is both corporate and government interest and investment not only responding to the present needs, but also to the future of the (life forms of the) region. In addition to fostering the general liveability and well-being of the area, this should involve building the base for other livelihoods than mining, and supporting the participation of the disadvantaged local communities. At any rate, community development should be supportive of critical civil society development. In a

democratic society, the lives, rights and living environment of people inhabiting the extractive peripheries are equally as valuable as those of others.

All said; much of pro-Adivasi community work in mining regions and beyond would need to be about remodelling the attitudes regarding Adivasis, and fostering and putting into practice strategies that support their identity politics and empowerment. This is a challenging task, as it requires on one hand time to establish reciprocally good relationship with the Adivasi communities, and on the other hand guts and wit to negotiate the community orientation with other, more powerful stakeholders. However, noting the current absence of critically minded community development workers in eastern Sundergarh, the chances are that the pro-Adivasi change will be slow and its results uncertain. On the other hand, would the corporations truly want to embrace community development as a CSR activity, they would need to incorporate the Adivasi perspective as part of their CSR strategy, com what may. Likewise, the Indian state, even if seeing mining as the "necessary evil" would need to educate the Adivasis on their rights, and organise and mobilise for their participation in the decision making processes regarding the mining industry. This work may not complete without networking and advocacy both at regional/national and international level to confirm to commitments made in various instruments and policies for the protection and development of the Adivasis.

Overall, the eastern Sundergarh case resembles many other peripheral places of mineral extraction, where the original inhabitants have had to step aside, mining jobs displace other livelihoods and continuity of ecosystems, and corporations define the modes of action for everybody else. Nevertheless, as Dyann Ross (2013, p. 200) reflects, based on lessons from a mining struggle in Australia, power and ethics are always context specific and inseparable. As much as 'community development' by corporations is likely to be an ethical minefield for critically minded community developers, little can be achieved without dialogue and constructive relationships with the companies. Whatever the strategy and however difficult the path, "ethical behaviour involves accountability towards the less powerful stakeholders without antagonising powerful parties" and ability "to maintain impartiality, independence and integrity between different stakeholder interests" (Ross, p. 206). The crucial and difficult challenge for those involved in community development work is to resist

being co-opted by powerful stakeholder interests, including those of their own employers, but find ways to be faithful to the situation on the ground.

Acknowledgements

The authors are greatly indebted for practical help provided by Manju and Basant Kerketta, Thomas Lakra and his colleagues and network, Sugad Surin, translation help from Poonam Kerketta and Nirupama Kujur, and administrative support from the TISS International Relations Office.

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