



Carbon Trading, Oil Extraction and 'Different' Forms of Community Development in Uganda

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Article

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by Peter Westoby

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In reflecting upon the work my colleague Dr Kristen Lyons and I have been doing in Uganda for a number of years, there are two case studies that, when considered with a social science, community development and political ecology lens, have relevance beyond the Ugandan context. This paper also draws substantially from a series of co-authored pieces Dr Lyons and I have written together, accessible from various sources.

I approach these case studies as a social scientist, using them to question what the particular role is of social science in the world of community development theory and practice. Some of my thoughts are that, firstly, social science should play a role in understanding how the 'powerful' work materially and discursively to undermine or marginalise the poor – and this role should enable practitioners or advocates to theorise and strategise more carefully. The first case study unpacks this social science role in relation to Green Resources, the largest industrial forestry multinational working in Africa. Secondly, social science should enable scholars and practitioners to observe and learn from the poor as to how they organise themselves. This learning should enable practitioners–professionals to know more about how to accompany citizens in social change work, and is the learning that is unpacked in the second case study, on the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE). Thirdly, social science, as per Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), should enable practitioners to regain their imaginative potentials (the equivalent of Freire's 'imaginative literacy') to change the world, and to not be limited by what is easily observed and sold to us.

I come to this work through the lens of community development (CD) theory and practice. While arguing for critical scholarship, it is important to situate my own views on community development. Some authors argue for 'true' or 'authentic' community development with a clear definition (Bhattacharyya, 2004). This is also the current position of the International Association of Community Development (IACD), which defines CD as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline concerned with the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities" (IACD, 2017, para. 1). However, within these case studies, I instead prefer to focus on how community development is discursively and materially deployed in practice. At no point do I argue that any actor, in this case Green Resources or the National Association of Professional Environmentalists, is not doing 'authentic community development', even though I subject them to critical analysis. Instead, I approach analysis of how community development is deployed through the analytical lens of traditions or models.

By traditions or models I refer, firstly, to the literature on divergent traditions of community development, such as social guidance, social mobilisation and social learning; or Freirean, Gandhian, and Alinskian approaches (see Campfens, 1997; Westoby & Simpson-Hope, 2011), each reflecting particular intellectual roots and practice norms; and, secondly, diverse models, commonly known within the community development literature as consensus, liberal/pluralist and radical models



(Gilchrist, 2004). Recognising such traditions and models then ensures that the practices of an official corporate community development approach can be 'evaluated' alongside some established orthodoxies of normative community development theory and practice. For example, the social learning tradition has established norms around popular education and Freire's contribution to critical learning.

Finally, I frame my work conceptually through political ecology. Political ecology as a framework aims "to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods" (Watts, 2000, p. 257). This definition emphasises the application of the political ecology framework to explain conflicts around common resources (Robbins, 2012). This power struggle over resources at the local level often results in both political and economic marginalisation of the vulnerable, namely peasants. My work in Uganda is understood via this political ecology theoretical orientation.

With these three settings in mind let us turn to the two key case studies, which shape the findings and arguments of my paper: the first, Green Resources; and the second, National Association of Professional Environmentalists.

CASE STUDY 1: GREEN RESOURCES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first two sites are linked to Green Resources, the first case study. Green Resources is a private Norwegian company engaged in forestry plantations, carbon offset, forest products and renewable energy on the African continent. Green Resources has a stated objective to "contribute to mitigating climate change while meeting the growing demand for quality wood products from well managed plantation forests and contributing to sustainable environmental management, community development and poverty alleviation in Uganda" (Green Resources, n.d.). It has invested over NOK600 million (US\$99.5 million) in tree planting in Africa (Garberg, 2012).

In Uganda, Green Resources has obtained 50-year licenses to engage in plantation forestry in two Central Forest Reserves. This includes the Bukaleba Forest Reserve in Mayuge District on the shores of Lake Victoria in eastern Uganda, and the Kachung Forest Reserve in Dokolo District, northern Uganda. Green Resources was awarded the license in Mayuge District in 1996 for 4500 hectares. This plantation is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and was validated and verified as an Afforestation and Reforestation project under the Verified Carbon Standard in 2012 (Green Resources, n.d.). This is Green Resources' first Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project, and carbon credits were sold to the Swedish Energy Agency with a contract that spans 2012 to 2032, estimated to be worth over US\$4 million. According to its Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Mugambe, 2007), 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide will be sequestered by this project over a 25-year period, or an average of 60,000 tonnes each year.

Research methods included both primary and secondary data collection. The primary data collection included focus-group discussions in nine villages affected by Green Resources' forestry plantation activities. Three of these villages are located within the boundary of the license area at Bukaleba, while six villages are located on the edges of the plantations at both Bukaleba and Kachung. In total, my colleague, our local co-worker and myself talked to at least 150 community members living alongside the forestry plantation sites. We visited a number of villages twice, and sometimes three times, undertaking follow-up focus-group discussions between 2012 and 2013, thereby enabling feedback on our research findings.

CASE STUDY 2: NAPE SUSTAINABILITY SCHOOLS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In relation to the third site, our research focused on the work of NAPE's Sustainability School Program that was supporting communities to understand the impact of petroleum extraction on their lives. More details about the programme are discussed later in the paper, but for now I will focus on the research methodology.

The case-study research was guided by two key elements. These included: firstly, a sense of solidarity with NAPE; secondly, a commitment to 'bearing witness' to those communities who are suffering from development-induced displacement. These elements informed our research design: an in-depth case study, informed by elements of an action research agenda.

Solidarity with NAPE: As researchers we have developed a sense of solidarity with NAPE over many years. One of the researchers (Dr Kristen Lyons) has known NAPE staff and interns for more than 10 years, and myself for three years. On the basis of this collaborative relationship that has grown organically over the long term, a more formal NGO-academic partnership was established, and between 2012 and 2014 focused on research and advocacy related to the multinational company



Green Resources (above). Starting in 2014, this partnership extended into jointly reflecting on the Sustainability Schools (SS) Program. This solidarity represents, for us, a form of engaged and rigorous research that is value-oriented towards social justice and transformative work.

Bearing witness: As researchers in solidarity with NAPE, we attempted to come to our work with what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as ‘objectivity without objectivism’ (1999 p. 276) in the sense that we were clear about our ideological stance, and yet ‘bracketed’ our stance so we could do rigorous and honest orthodox research. We also felt that our role was not only to conduct research, but to engage with empathy and in solidarity with villages affected by oil exploration in the Hoima District (and to those who have lost their land to make way for the first Ugandan-based oil refinery). This led us to engage in small supporting efforts to make their voices heard through social media, and also fundraising to support provision of food, basic household items and clothing to those in need. In this sense we see our work as ‘bearing witness’ to those who experience development-induced displacement, but who are invisible to the world’s media, and therefore lack a voice.

Informed by our understanding of solidarity and bearing witness, we selected an in-depth case study with NAPE to explore elements of a transformative education agenda. The case study – NAPE’s Sustainability School initiative in the Hoima District – was selected on the basis of two factors: NAPE’s longevity working in this region, and the high levels of conflict and community concerns associated with oil extraction in the district. The fieldwork drawn on in this paper occurred in late November 2015.

Reflecting the collaborative action research agenda, the fieldwork started with discussions with key NAPE staff in Kampala. Subsequent to this, we travelled to the case study site, Hoima, where we met the NAPE field staff, including their key field worker, and the Community Green Radio team – an offshoot of the SS launched in 2014 – to amplify the voices of those affected by the oil industry. For the next nine days we visited several places that have become what NAPE calls ‘Sustainability Villages’, including Community Green Radio listeners clubs. Listeners’ clubs have been established to enable local communities to have a platform to provide direct input into the development of content for radio programming. When a community has a number of community educators and community projects, local communities also often refer to this as a Sustainability Village. In order to contextualise our understanding of the work of NAPE in the broader local context, we also visited communities that wanted Sustainability Villages to start ‘camps’ of displaced people who ‘wish they’d had a Sustainability Village’ to help avert their displacement, as well as an annual monitoring and evaluation workshop with many people involved, including a key funding partner, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

During those two weeks we listened, questioned, took notes, were questioned ourselves (including some very hard ones such as, “What are you doing with those notes?”), went on radio, laughed with many people and even cried occasionally.

Overall we interviewed 15 people and conducted four focus groups (attended by between five and 15 people). These participants included community educators that volunteer with ‘Sustainability



Schools', participants in the programme at village level, key staff from NAPE, as well as representatives from the funders.

Ethical approval for both case studies in this research was provided by The University of Queensland Ethical Review Committee.

THE CONTEXT FOR CASE STUDY 1 – GREEN RESOURCES

Firstly, Uganda, like many poorer countries, has experienced about 40 years of structural adjustment policies combined with neoliberalism. In those 40 years the government has been 'emptied' of much capacity – it's quite literally been 'sold off' through forms of privatisation, or budgets have been cut, and the government has moved toward 'regulating' rather than 'acting'. In common governance language we could say, 'the state now steers rather than rows'. The rowing is now meant to occur via the private sector. The correlate to 'emptying the state', is the 'privatisation of development' – the big actors in development are no longer the state or even NGOs, but private actors, primarily corporations.

Second, like many places in Africa (and elsewhere), deforestation is a big problem – mainly due to the need for more land for agriculture and 'development' (roads, dams, etc.), as well as the need for poor people to cut down trees for fuel. So the Ugandan state has a big challenge. On the one hand it needs to deal with deforestation, and on the other hand, it has less capacity – officers, staff, money – to regulate, enforce and so forth.

Third, the world is trying to deal with carbon emissions, and one 'big solution' is a market form of carbon trading, part of the new Green Economy (an example being the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation programme [REDD]) enabling people in countries like ours to keep consuming and emitting as always, but offsetting those patterns of consumption/emission through trading carbon credits elsewhere.

Enter Green Resources (GR) – the focus of this first case study – the largest forestry company operating within Africa, Norwegian owned, and working in two significant sites within Uganda. Basically the Ugandan state (that lacks capacity itself) leases forests that have been gradually degraded by local people (who have been cutting trees so they can grow crops, or cutting for fuel) to GR. GR then 'locks up' these forests for 35 years so that it can trade the carbon captured by that lock-up on the international carbon trading market. GR has done this in Uganda, selling its first carbon credits to the Swedish Energy Agency so that Swedish energy consumers can buy premium 'green energy' (and feel good that they've saved the forests of Uganda). Green Resources has obtained the relevant permits (permits include recognition as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project on one of its sites, as well as validation under the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard (CCBS)) and the first carbon credits have been sold to the Swedish Energy Agency, with carbon contracts valued at \$US4 million (Green Resources, 2014a).

However, it should be said that due to the report published by the Oakland Institute in 2014 (Lyons, Westoby, & Richards, 2014) a Swedish documentary team went into the communities and did their own research. When broadcast in Sweden in October 2015, the Swedish Minister of Climate Change cancelled those carbon credit payments until the company could prove it has 'cleaned up its act'.

In terms of 'cleaning up its act', the issue at hand is that in the process of forests being locked up for carbon trading many local people have lost access to what was 'their commons' – the forest, where they used to intercrop, find fuel, or visit traditional cultural sites. My research, with Kristen Lyons, has been documenting this development-induced forced migration in recent years, as people are dislocated from their land, or denied access to land that they could live on.

Furthermore, the company uses 'community development' (explicitly) as a way of working with communities, offering scholarships to children, building some health clinics, fixing roads and so on. They also employ local people as security guards to ensure people are not accessing the forests. So I have been very interested in this new field of corporate deployment of community development.

HOW GREEN RESOURCES CONCEPTUALISES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Green Resources commits ten per cent of their carbon trading profits towards community projects through a community development strategy, which is a quota requirement to ensure compliance with the international carbon trading certification.

As part of its community development plan, Green Resources has implemented a wide range of projects. Specifically, and over the almost two decades, it has operated in Uganda. At different times the company has rehabilitated a health centre, provided some medical supplies, drilled bore holes



and rehabilitated spring wells, provided scholarships for young girls through a 'Girls' Education' programme to attend school up to university-entry point, distributed free tree seedlings and promoted tree planting, undertaken an efficient cook-stove project, established community woodlots, enabled community access to fuel-wood from thinning and pruning, and with financial support from the Foundation for Integrated Rural Development, has implemented HIV/AIDS awareness activities (Green Resources, 2014a).

The community development focus of Green Resources is officially predetermined to focus on "improving education, healthcare, infrastructure and food/income security" (Green Resources, nd). Each plantation area employs a community development officer who is tasked to work consultatively and collaboratively with stakeholders (mainly local government officials) in identifying needs and supporting communities in the establishment of particular projects, but within the frame of the predetermined foci.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF FINDINGS

While the community development projects described above have delivered some tangible benefits for people from affected villages, the findings I discuss below indicate how these investments fall short of Green Resources' stated objective to deliver community development and poverty alleviation, as well as being disconnected from many local needs and aspirations.

A NARRATIVE

Now consider a focus group meeting a colleague and I are running – attended by the chairman of one of the affected villages, members of the village governing committee and around 15 other villagers, including a woman self-described as a widow. We are discussing the impacts of Green Resources. While concerned with the villagers' loss of land to grow subsistence crops, the village committee and chairman have been somewhat positive about the company. They describe the benefits of the company's community development initiatives, such as quarterly provision of medicines to the local government-run health centre (the state is not supplying medicine as it says this is the responsibility of GR), and provision of a scholarship for one of the best-performing girls of the village. However the woman, along with several others, is quick to argue:

What is the use of medicine if we have no land to grow food and no schools to ensure there is a future for our children?

She goes on to explain that because she does not have land she is "forced to try and use some of the company land to grow food," but says:

We are chased away from our garden after one season. I was growing crops and the security personnel allowed me to prepare my garden and then when it was mature, and because there were no trees growing, they slashed it down... I am living off the handouts from other neighbours in the village.

While poor, the village chairman is certainly not among the poorest of the poor. He seems to have enough income to purchase food and other basic necessities, and therefore sees a functioning health clinic as an additional development benefit. Yet he, along with most official leaders interviewed, is cognisant of the plight of his people. He explains the history of forced displacement due to government action and foreign investment, and advocates for more land so villagers in his parish can grow food. The voice of the woman, however, represents a disjuncture between both official corporate-led community development discourse and practices of the company (Maconachie & Hilson, 2013), and the lived experience of many people. It also signifies a schism between the beneficial claims of new forms of green economy and their impacts at the grassroots level.

FINDING #1 – CONTESTED 'COMMUNITY ANALYSES' OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT BENEFITS

As per this story of the widow, findings indicate that there are diverse and, at times, contested analyses by community members of the benefits of the Green Resources community development work. While some community leaders tended to affirm the benefit of the projects started under the auspices of the company, often initiated by the company community development team, most



community members and some community leaders interviewed did not identify any of the community development projects as a benefit.

This is not to say that they were not a benefit – it is simply to say that they were not the issues people wanted to talk about within the fieldwork. People instead wanted to talk about the loss of land; albeit occasionally people did talk about sanitation, health and education. To almost all people the crucial issue was food – to avoid hunger – and their analyses of the only two ways of dealing with hunger were to appropriate some land – either their own or through accessing land of the company (to intercrop among plantation trees, known locally as the *taunga* system); or find work within the company enabling them to purchase food.

Community members mostly discussed the benefits of the company in terms of the limited employment created within the company – overall between 200 and 800 depending on the time of the year. The 2008 EIS report documents 199 people (mostly men) employed by Green Resources, including in the activities of slashing, planting and tree maintenance (Mugambe, 2007). Meanwhile, a 2012 United Nations report documented 264 casual employees at one site, and 600 employed people at the second.

Local villagers also described poor working conditions, including delayed salary payments, as well as being forced to cover the costs of purchasing safety equipment (such as safety boots, raincoats and gloves) and uniforms. Only one person interviewed described the overall strategy of the company as good, which in his perspective was that the company was “‘dragging’ people into the market cash economy.”

What is crucial for the findings is that community members rarely identified the company’s community development activities as a priority. The experience of community members and protestors is that land is avoided within the considerations of the company’s community development purview at all costs.

FINDING #2 – COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OR DEAF EARS?

Secondly, in relation to the company CD strategy, the overwhelming findings were that, as one participant put it, “We attend meetings, but our requests fall on deaf ears.”

Again, the requests refer to on-going concerns related to land loss – that is, access to food-growing opportunities to avoid hunger. The establishment of consultation mechanisms appears to be a way of ‘managing’ communities, a particular technology of governmentality that deploys community development with the primary purpose of averting people’s anger, frustration and claims to do with land.

FINDING #3 – THE CENTRALITY OF LAND TO PEOPLE – BUT NOT TO GR’S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

While there is a long history of dispossession from land now licensed to Green Resources, there are also recent accounts of forced relocation of homes and livelihood activities linked to expansion of the company’s plantation activities.

The eviction of people from land now licensed to Green Resources began prior to the arrival of the company, and was driven by broader national policies to clear the land to enable privatisation and commodification of natural resources. There are various accounts of eviction at both sites now licensed to the company that span at least four decades. At both sites, community members and local leaders recounted stories of people being ‘chased away’ and ‘thrown out’, thereby making way for private investors.

Some villagers described the forced relocation of livelihood activities – including agriculture and grazing – as the company expanded its tree planting areas. Community members from one village described how company staff arrived, without notice, and “just starting to plant trees on top of our crops... we were evicted without discussion.” This expansion has intensified what local villagers describe as acute shortages of land for food growing in each region.

In the context of these land issues, local villagers expressed a range of emotions and responses. These included frustration and despair – particularly in relation to the company’s perceived insensitivity to their livelihood needs – through to deep concern that community members were soon going to ‘take matters into their own hands’ as they lost trust in agreements made, but not adhered to, by the company. People described a potentially explosive future, with people saying such things as, “We would rather die in jail fighting for land, than die of hunger.”



DISCUSSION – SO, WHAT TO MAKE OF THIS?

The findings indicate that the practices of Green Resources' community development work are being primarily shaped by the aspirations and constraints of the company's agendas, not those of the villages. In a sense the kind of community development deployed by the company reflects (referring to my earlier comments) what has historically been understood as a social guidance tradition or consensus model whereby the company leads the analyses of what interventions are prioritised.

Within this frame, community development can be seen as becoming a social technology to validate preconceived policy, or in the case of Green Resources, preconceived programme activities. The market context, which ultimately shapes Green Resources' work, and the complexities of power differentials and diverse community needs are ignored as the community development approach engages in its strategy.

What I am describing here is a paradox in climate governance. On the one hand the climate governance mechanisms seek to 'protect' forestry plantations from activities that might disrupt carbon capture. At the same time, however, this often comes at a profound cost to local communities. And yet the governance mechanisms themselves are ill equipped to detect and respond to, so as to remedy these impacts. Indeed, the enclosure of landscapes away from livelihood activities is an intended outcome of carbon governance; yet it is this very trend that is driving social, economic and ecological disruption.

Reiterating my introductory comments that there is no such thing as 'authentic' or 'real' community development, and recognising that there is a discursive space within the community development literature for contested traditions and models, I argue two main points from this first story:

Firstly, that the claims of the company fall short of community-felt needs. Some community members access employment from the company, and others enjoy the benefits of particular projects, however, most people want access to land to grow food. Despite this, the technologies of governance underpinning the green economy described here require a company such as Green Resources to 'lock up the land' for the purposes of marketised forms of carbon trading. Certifications require a guarantee of 'permanence' (referring to the capacity to store carbon over the long term – 35 years, actually), which in turn requires the locking up of land. The form and content of community development I describe is therefore shaped or constrained by the broader green economy in which it is deployed, which, as per the literature, is shaped by the neoliberal context. A neoliberal model of community development becomes part of the social technology of governance, legitimising people's loss of land usage. There is, then, a certain inevitability about the failure of CD deployed within these given frames.

Secondly, despite a community development strategy by Green Resources, there is still a willingness to marginalise, or manage any dissident voices via police and security mechanisms. Violence is embedded in this process of enclosure and neoliberal community development – in some of our publications we have called this 'carbon violence'.

Importantly, on the basis of our analysis we identified that what could most help the dissident voices is the insertion of other actors into the situation to ensure more accountability of the company. At this stage the accountability mechanisms are being enacted without direct involvement of the communities affected (e.g., our Oakland Institute report, Swedish documentary, etc.), which raises many dilemmas.

This could entail NGOs that draw upon other community development traditions, such as the social learning and social mobilising traditions; or different models – such as the radical one. Such NGOs would, through forms of popular education and/or community organising 'from below', support different population groups within communities to make visible the connections between their lived experience and the forms of green economic activity being enacted by entities such as Green Resources and other development agents. Which brings us to story two and the December 2015 research.

CASE STUDY 2: NAPE AND THE SUSTAINABILITY SCHOOL PROGRAM

My colleague and I have been driving for some hours with our driver Emma, along with Precious, who is one of the journalists of Community Green Radio, and Vincent, the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) Sustainability School field worker for the Hoima District of Uganda. It is a long day, visiting two Sustainability Villages (SVs) – one that is six years old, and another that is only eighteen months old. We are learning about the issues affecting the communities of these SVs – in this region related mainly to oil exploration, and soon-to-be-drilled and -piped oil – and about the Sustainability School Program of NAPE, also known as Friends of the Earth Uganda, the NGO we



educators – in the early years this included two community educators per village, but in more recent years it has grown to four per village (two men and two women) – and the equipping of these educators with resources such as bicycles (to get around to local communities and do the education work) and mobile phones. These community educators are volunteers. Generally the community, through a process of public deliberation, chooses these community educators. These educators are the heartbeat of the initiative, bringing people together in villages, literally to ‘sit under the mango tree’ to share issues of concern and ideas related to, in the Hoima District, oil exploration. These educators also work with NAPE field workers to organise ‘horizontal learning’ exchanges between villages affected by development (both within districts and also across the nation and also internationally, such as in Kenya and Nigeria, where communities are also being affected by such displacing industries).

Signposting the practice (and I could say so much more about gender, popular theatre, and community radio), I simply mention that what we learned and reflected on about the pedagogy and practice included:

- The real work of adult education, de-schooling, and popular education (as per Kolb, Illich and Freire);
- Community organising – which I started to see as really Fanonian –local people in dialogue with ‘organic intellectuals’ (the community educators), which makes it also Gramscian;
- The importance of building local CBOs and even NGOs (issue of federating CBOs or NGOs was a point of tension and discussion).

But what is interesting for the sake of this paper are some key tensions.

DIALOGUE AND TENSIONS IN ADVOCACY APPROACHES AND THEORIES OF CHANGE

One tension was awareness that sometimes international and national framing of issues and advocacy approaches were not the same as local positions, including the articulation of what can be understood as both radical and reform theories of change. Most obvious here was the tension between Friends of the Earth (FoE) International’s/ NAPE’s (as FoE affiliate) ‘keep oil in the soil’ campaign approach (a radical change agenda reflecting a ‘post-development’ vision of society), and some local community members, for whom there was acceptance of oil extraction (“Oil can be a curse, but we want it to be a blessing,” as several local people put it to us), as long as the benefits associated with the industry are distributed fairly, accountably and transparently (indicative of a reform agenda, reflecting a perspective of humanising conventional development).

These two positions live in tension, and require an understanding of dialogue, and compromise between the international and local NGO perspective and that held by the Sustainability Villages and CBOs. As part of effectively managing this tension, NAPE describes their role as facilitating horizontal learning – a process whereby local communities co-learn with other communities in Uganda (and elsewhere) affected by extractive industries.

In adopting this approach, rather than ‘imposing’ a radical theory of change (‘keep oil in the soil’) on local communities the Sustainability School model enables local communities to come to their own position, through an informed and detailed dialogic and embodied experience.

In the main, it appears, the outcome of this is that local communities take a position that is commensurate with NAPE’s radical agenda. In taking this approach, NAPE is able to avoid being seen as taking a heavy-handed approach in imposing a theory of change, and can be seen as facilitating local communities’ rich learning on the impacts of extractive industries, and the diversity of approaches and theories of change, including the option of saying no to certain forms of development.

In terms of future research it would be very interesting to see what NAPE would do if local community-based organisations within the SS programme officially adopted a reform position, contrary to NAPE’s position. The tensions around both dialogue practices, and also between education and organising become very clear within such work, a rich tension for future research.

POPULAR EDUCATION AND A REACTIONARY STATE

Another tension within this ‘pedagogy-in-practice’ is that the education and community organising approach is part of a broader strategy of building a social movement and critical mass. Part of the rationale for this is that the NGO NAPE knows that at any time the Ugandan state can deregister them. This threat became very real to Oxfam Uganda in 2013 when they campaigned against the New Forest Company, work similar to our earlier work with NAPE highlighting human rights abuses by Green Resources. The Ugandan state very nearly de-registered Oxfam Uganda. Our meetings with



Oxfam Uganda had to be completely 'off the record'.

This constant threat by the state highlights the important role of an NGO in building a critical mass, a people's movement via popular education, and community organising that can sustain itself – in case the catalysing NGO itself is deregistered. The political context also highlights the importance of a nuanced strategy. NAPE's work highlights the importance of popular education, organising the poor and developing strategies that cross assemblages of scale and size, being situated alongside significant investment in dialoguing with security forces and government officials. Dialogue became front and centre in the practice, not as a way of appeasing the state, but as a way of ensuring the NGO could keep working in the sensitive space it finds itself.

A key point here is that the literature on community or transformative education often lacks analysis of the linkages between education, organising and movement building, across scale within particularly volatile political contexts (see Westoby & Lyons, 2017).

CONCLUSION

With these key points in mind I will conclude by sharing some brief reflections on both researchers' and authors' dilemmas, and then some linkages with my introduction.

Some key dilemmas unfolded for us as researchers and authors. Firstly, when the initial Oakland Institute/NAPE report was published – 'Carbon Violence: The Darker Side of Green' (Lyons, Westoby, & Richards, 2014) – we were overwhelmed with media attention, threats of court action, and activism engagement. Time was seriously diverted from research work and we were not equipped to lead a campaign – we are not campaigners. I really started to question what the role of academics or engaged scholarship is in campaign work; I still live with that question. It is a tough balancing act. Secondly, when we asked NAPE if we could learn about their Sustainability School (SS) programme (case study 2) they asked, "Couldn't we use the money you'll use for the research to fund SS programmes in communities affected by Green Resources?" A reasonable question, but we could not oblige, as our funding resources came from the Australian Research Council (ARC) for research. Our response was legitimate, but it raised dilemmas about how to hold both an NGO perspective, and ours as researchers, and I still wonder a lot about the meaning of this request from NAPE staff and our inadequate response. Thirdly, when we 'see' such violence as experienced in these case studies, what do we do? Yes, writing and publishing is an act of activism; but is it enough? As partners to the NGO NAPE, along with other organisations such as The Oakland Institute (my colleague is a research fellow there), we are linked to other forms of activism that are beyond writing. This seems to be a crucial way forward, ensuring our writing work is linked closely to action–learning, action–research, and activist practices of the NGOs we work with, and the social movements they support. Finally, it is dangerous for us to go to these communities – we only could go with the NGO – but local people live with on-going potential fallout from our work. This creates many continuing ethical dilemmas.

With these dilemmas in mind, I return to some of the aspirations articulated in the introduction. As a social scientist and community development scholar–practitioner I see research as playing a crucial role in illuminating the way community development is deployed – in these two case studies, as corporate, and NGO, with the different traditions and models, particularly in an era of a scaled-back state. Intriguingly, most community development practitioners would assume their work to be 'doing good'. Certainly the community workers deployed by Green Resources in the first case study assumed so. Social science contributes to community development scholarship and practice, putting such assumptions to scrutiny. Of course, this is not to assume that corporate-led CD is doing harm, and NGO-led CD (as per NAPE) is doing good. All deployment of CD needs to be scrutinised.

Beyond community development, social science drawing on conceptual frameworks such as political ecology also helps people 'see' new forces of change; in this case the green economy, or a particular form of it – carbon trading. In this case such research helps scholars and practitioners understand how the 'powerful' work materially and discursively to undermine, or marginalise, the poor. As stated in the introduction, this should also enable activists, practitioners and advocates to theorise and strategise more carefully. In understanding how new forms of commodification and the creation of new markets render invisible violence and dispossession, practitioners can consider strategies and tactics for social movement building and community organising, as per the ideas that emerge from the second case study (the work of the Sustainability Schools).

Again referring to the introduction, social science should also enable scholars and practitioners to observe and learn from the poor as to how they organise themselves. The second case study certainly helps in this regard, exploring how a programme works out in practice combining adult, transformative and popular education, integrated with forms of community organising that enable communities to create a social movement – thereby offering alternatives to orthodox



'development' (in this case, oil drilling equals jobs). Such social science work supports pluralist and radical models of community development that resource scholars and practitioners in the spirit of my other introductory comment – namely, as per Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*, enabling us to regain our imaginative potentials to change the world.

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