

There is growing agitation across the globe to give second generation rights more prominence on national, regional and global development agendas. Never before have we seen issues of economic justice being given so much attention, as done issues of political and civic rights, driven mainly by a wave of increasing demands for civic participation and democratic, open societies. The last decade has also witnessed heightened developments and strengthening of social movements demanding not only civic rights, but also socio-economic justice across the globe.

Part of this emerging discourse around economic justice has increasingly focused on public resource management – incorporating natural resources extraction, processing and utilisation, especially in the resource rich countries, where the economies largely depend on these. The emergent debates have also put on the agenda budgetary processes – calling governments to account for how budgets are formulated and expended in the respective countries. We have seen a number of initiatives tracking resource extraction and expenditure, as well as the related issues of public service delivery in a number of countries and the emergence of movements such as ecological debt and reparations, and campaigns such as Publish What You Pay, among others.

However, this heightened focus on public resource management is only beginning to take root in our part of the world – Southern Africa. This is despite the fact that the region encompasses some of the most resource-rich countries on the continent. Even more disturbing, or ironical, is the fact that the region also has some of the highest levels of poverty and underdevelopment in the world. In most cases, the resources have turned out to be more of a curse for most of these countries – usually being at the centre of the countries’ political and economic instability, armed wars and many other such vices. Yet, it has taken our region so long to explore the dynamics around resource extraction in a way that develops a discourse that helps civil society organisations and other interested parties to effectively advocate for and demand transparency in the way these public resources are managed by our governments.

This Issue of *OPENSOURCE* is an attempt to set the agenda for debate and discussion on some of these issues, and to provide space for not only mapping out where the region’s resources are located, but more importantly, how the region is continuously “cursed” by these resources.

As **André Standing and Hennie van Vuuren** concede in their article “Who Cursed Natural Resources in Southern Africa?” the reasons why natural resources in Southern Africa, and even in Africa generally, do not enrich African development are complex; they argue that the natural resource curse may be symptomatic rather than a problem unto itself. The reasons range from Africa’s

marginal position in the global economy, explored in **Patricia Feeney’s** “Globalisation and its Challenges for Public Resource Management in Southern Africa”, the power and values of those plundering the resources, and internal challenges of poor governance and accountability in the African countries themselves.

However, multinational capital, especially as manifested through Multi-National Corporations (MNCs), has also played a major role in fueling this resource curse, as **Patrick Bond** illustrates in the article “Multinational Capital’s Responsibility for Africa’s Resource Extraction Crisis.” He argues that the current patterns of exploitation are strongly rooted in the historical legacy of “a continent looted: trade by force dating back centuries; slavery that uprooted around 12 million Africans; land grabs; vicious taxation schemes; precious metals spirited away and that the solution to the looting of Africa is to be found in the self-activity of progressive Africans themselves, in their campaigns and declarations – in own their struggles.”

An even more worrying trend is the apparent continuation of this legacy of looting, of course in a new disguised form, as illustrated by **Deprose Muchena** in his article “The China Factor in Southern Africa: New Partner or Patron?” where he argues that the interest of the Chinese in Africa has shifted over the years from ideological, in the 1970s, to economic as illustrated by the wave of Chinese corporations “investing” on the continent, making the Chinese “the most voracious capitalists on the continent today”, as he puts it. The key question is whether or not China has taken over the role of the very same forces that it purported to assist Africa fight against in the 1970s. As illustrated in this, and other articles, in this Issue, the Chinese “investment” on the continent is often characterised by a “no questions asked” approach which has grave implications for the observance and adherence to issues of environmental and human rights for the host citizens, often resulting in the kind of environmental, social and economic problems articulated in **Ben van Tonder’s** article “The Effects of Extractive Industries on Communities in Southern Africa”.

But it is not only the growth of China that is of concern to the continued exploitation of the continent’s resources. South Africa is also emerging as a sub-imperial power on the continent, as **Patrick Bond and Tapera Kapuya** illustrate in their analysis of the role of South Africa corporations on the continent, in their article, “‘Arrogant, disrespectful, aloof and careless’: South African Corporations in Africa”, where they illustrate how Pretoria is extending her tentacles on the continent, in a manner that approximates how Cecil John Rhodes plundered Africa, and their assertion is that “We do have much to learn about today’s conditions if we revisit late Nineteenth Century Africa, in part because no other buccaneer did as much damage to the possibilities for peace and equitable development as Cecil Rhodes.”

Apart from these global, continental and regional dynamics, there are also a myriad of challenges in the “host countries” on the continent; ranging from lack of transparency mechanisms – including in key processes such as budget-making and revenue in- and out-flows. In most countries in the region, the budget formulation and expenditure is a preserve of the government bureaucrats, with little, if any, input by civil society or the public, which in turn raises challenges for accountability, when it comes to accounting for the resource flows in the extractive industry. These are some of the issues that **Masimba Manyanya** explores in his article “Public Budgeting Transparency” in which he illustrates how governments in the region do not allow civil society space to contribute in the formulation and allocation of public budgets. **Elias Isaac and Albertina Delgado** illustrate this further in their exploration of how the Angolan government has managed or mismanaged oil and diamond revenues in the country; talking transparency and accountability and not acting it. They reveal in their article “Oil and Diamond Revenues and Budget Transparency in Angola: Rhetoric and Reality” how hundreds of millions of dollars have gone missing in the various sectors, with no effort by the government to account for it.

Bad governance and corruption have made the situation worse in most countries. Dubious contracts and ventures are sealed in secrecy, and there is massive embezzlement of tax and other revenues generated. The case is well illustrated by **Kirsten Hund and Didier Verbruggen** when they analyse governance and mining activities under the transitional regime in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the article “Governance, Mining and the Transitional Regime in the DRC: the case of Katanga.” They argue that “bad governance, a rampant lack of capacity and overall corruption have led to the collapse of the formal mining sector, misery, environmental degradation, human rights violations and political instability in what was once the most prosperous part of the DRC.” This has, in turn, led to the emergence of an exploitative and dangerous mining phenomenon known as *creuseurs* (artisanal mining) which **Hubert Tshiswaka** articulates well in his case study “Artisanal or Miners Without Rights?”


All these challenges are closely linked to the problem of lack of access to information on issues of public interest, and **Mzi Memeza** argues in his analysis “Access to Information Key to Good Practice in Public Resource Management”, that unfortunately, the willingness of governments in Southern Africa to make information in state hands available is not about to be over. He argues that there is “a dialectical relationship between the lack of access to information on public resource management and expenditure and the denial of economic justice to the public.” However, even in the few countries where access to information is guaran-

teed, governments have been selective on what information the public can access, and information pertaining to transactions in the extractive industries has been particularly kept under wraps.

Part of the problem is also the lack of effective regulatory frameworks across the continent. Although there are a few international instruments – and national laws in a few countries – regulating trade and investment broadly, none in the region specifically focus on the extractive industry. Even where these exist, they are hardly enforced and again because the public often do not have access to information on how most of these extractive deals are done, it is difficult to take the governments to task on resource management issues. These are the issues that **Louise Olivier’s** explores in “Resource Extraction in Southern Africa: Providing an Effective Regulatory Framework” and echoed in **Patrick Matibini’s** analysis of “The State of Public Resource Management Regulation in Southern Africa” where the focus is on the budget-making regulatory framework. Both articles decry the fact that some countries do have laws and legislation that are not being fully enforced to deal with especially issues of corruption.

There are opportunities to harness legal remedies from the countries where the extracting companies are coming from, although the costs and complex investigations required often result in not many of them enforcing such laws, as illustrated by the Lesotho Highlands Water project case in the **Open Society Justice Initiative’s** summary “Legal Remedies for the Resource Curse in Home and Host Countries.”

Interest groups such as civil society organisations have continued to play an important part in awareness raising and advocacy and there are some lessons from the Caspian Basin experiences as shared by **Vugar Bayramov** in “Enhancing Transparency in Budgets and Oil Revenues in the Caspian Basin: Civil Society has a Key Role to Play” in this Issue. The question would be whether there is adequate skills and capacity among NGOs to effectively engage with such issues, especially in Southern Africa. But initiatives and tools such as the questionnaires developed by the AfriMap project, “Monitoring Public Service Delivery: AfriMAP’s Approach” as summarised by **Bronwen Manby** could be indicators that there is a lot of potential. And **Silibaziso Mtunzi** explores some extractive models that have seemed to work in the region, in her piece “Private-Public Partnerships: the Debswana Model.”

A number of issues have been highlighted in this Issue, and I hope these will excite enough debate, and to seriously explore ways in which we can lift the resource curse bedeviling the region and the continent. 

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