Introduction

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Corruption is frequently recognized as a major contributor to poor development outcomes from natural resources. Natural resource sectors not only provide fertile ground for various forms of corrupt practices; corruption is often embedded in natural resource management systems themselves.[1] Resource sectors, from this perspective, can motivate and facilitate corrupt practices, especially given the vast revenues usually involved, the remoteness of many operations, the confidentiality of most contractual arrangements, and the discretionary power of government officials exercised over 'national' resources. Corrupt practices, in turn, can undermine resource management policies, reduce revenue collection, damage the environment, erode trust in the state, and exacerbate socio-economic inequalities. Heavily influenced by the *resource curse* or the *paradox of plenty* paradigms,[2] much of the academic literature on corruption and natural resources emphasizes the distorting effects of resource wealth on economic performance and governing institutions. Development economists Ivar Kolstad and Tina Søreide (2009: 214) characterize corruption as '*the* development problem in resource-rich countries'. The diversity of development outcomes among resource-rich countries has motivated major efforts to identify explanations and remedies, with anti-corruption initiatives figuring prominently among these.

Engaging with this growing body of literature and initiatives, this volume seeks to contribute to contemporary debates over resource-related corruption and anti-corruption policies. Drawing from cases across the spectrum of resource sectors, we specifically point at the value of more nuanced understandings of 'corruption' to offer useful pathways for researchers and anti-corruption reformers. By recognizing corruption as a form of governance in itself, rather than simply an exceptional deviance from 'good governance' to be remedied through 'tougher controls', we hope to inform more grounded understandings of corruption, and to help refine more effective policies. Reaching these objectives, we suggest, rests in part on bringing a 'political ecology' perspective into studies of corruption to better grasp the interplay of uneven power relations with the materialities, social histories, and political economies of specific places and resource sectors.

As discussed below, our argument here is threefold: First, that the analysis of governance challenges in natural resource sectors typically found in the resource curse literature does not pay sufficient attention to the particular *contexts* and *incentives* shaping corruption in a broad range of settings. Second, that a recent flourishing of social science research on corruption has led to improved understanding of the need to explicitly address the *political character* of corrupt practices. And third, that the conceptualization and treatments of *power relations* in the political ecology literature offer useful avenues for understanding decisions to engage (or not) in corruption.

BEYOND THE CURSE? RECENT TRENDS IN RE-FRAMING NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR CHALLENGES

Scholars have recently explored resource curse challenges from perspectives that mark a departure from the typical national-level comparative cross-country analysis found in earlier literature on the curse. The inclusion of subnational variables and processes, such as local political elections and decentralization, have allowed for a more refined analysis of the effects of resource wealth and dependence (Monteiro and Ferraz 2010; Arellano-Yanguas 2011; Libman 2013; Loayza et al. 2013; Cust and Viale 2016). New studies have also examined more closely the specificities of different resource sectors, broadened the scope of processes affecting the impacts of resource sectors, and examined possibilities of reverse causality (James 2015). Engaging with the political economy of policy reform in resource-rich countries, Arezki et al. (2011), for instance, argue that successfully navigating the particular contexts associated with reform processes is a precondition for reaping the benefits of resource wealth, hence pointing to the importance of politically negotiated settlements. McNeish and Logan (2012) provide a set of historical studies on the socio-economics of oil and gas in countries stretching from Northern Europe to the Caucasus, and argue that the role of social movements has been under-represented in analyses of extractive industry success stories emphasizing the quality of government institutions. At the same time, interest has been growing in studying resource-related corruption beyond the high-value extractive sectors (oil, gas and mining) typically addressed by resource curse scholars. Recent studies have covered the land, wildlife, forestry and fisheries sectors from a range of analytical and theoretical perspectives. For example, Chinsinga and Wren-Lewis (2014) show that despite demand for reforms on the part of investors and members of the local population in Malawi, corruption played a role in highly uneven and inefficient land distributions there. Applying the concept of state–corporate crime to an analysis of corruption in Senegal's marine fisheries, Standing (2015) argues that the home governments of foreign fishing fleets have knowingly supported corruptly gained access to overfished Senegalese stocks vital to local food security. Several studies have also sharply criticized the resource curse paradigm (Di John 2011), not only questioning its empirics (Brunnschweiler and Bulte 2008), but stressing that the so-called 'curse' is the outcome of policy decisions rather than structural factors (Saad-Filho and Weeks 2013). Taken together, these studies indicate an ongoing scholarly preoccupation with re-framings of natural resource sector challenges in developing countries in ways departing from a resource curse perspective and, at times, challenging some of its core assumptions.

ADVANCES IN CORRUPTION RESEARCH: THINKING POLITICALLY ABOUT CORRUPTION

Recent theoretical work on corruption has combined principal–agent, collective action and corruption-as-problem-solving approaches to enhance our understanding of corruption, notably by thinking more *politically* about corruption, and thus about its function within processes of collective decision-making. Principal–agent theory still shapes much mainstream understanding of corruption and its impacts on development (Marquette and Pfeiffer 2015). In this perspective, corruption is presented as a *double principal–agent problem* in which 'imperfect' formal institutions in charge of controlling corruption fail to prevent agents from opportunistic corrupt behaviour: either political leaders tasked with monitoring bureaucrats (agents) fail to adequately supervise them, thus enabling opportunistic rent extraction, or the imperfect control of officials' behaviour affords them discretion to abuse their position (Rose-Ackerman 1978; Klitgaard 1988; Bardhan 1997). While the prevention of corruption through control mechanisms can be valuable, the weak track record of anti-corruption interventions has contributed to a revisiting of these theoretical assumptions. In contrast, critics of the principal–agent view (Persson et al. 2013; Mungiu-Pippidi 2006; Rothstein 2011) argue that corruption should rather be seen as a *collective action problem* through which individual perceptions and intra-group trust influence the collective aims of groups (Elster 1985; Ostrom 1990; Seabright 1993). This alternative view of corruption suggests that, in supposedly 'endemically corrupt' contexts, the rewards and costs of engaging in corruption are such that it should be understood as the *expected* behaviour rather than an aberration from the norm. In other words, there is little or no incentive to oppose or even abstain from it (Persson et al. 2013). Whereas proponents of the collective action view tend to emphasize the ways in which it differs from principal–agent thinking, Marquette and Pfeiffer (2015) propose approaching principal–agent and collective action thinking as complementary frameworks for understanding corruption challenges. In this view, which we share, corruption should not only be seen as a 'problem', but also as a 'function' within social, political and economic transactions. In many countries, discretionary control over the allocation of resource rights and uses is key to sustain patronage networks at a variety of scales (van de Walle 2001). As Nelson and Agrawal (2008: 557) demonstrate in their study of community-based wildlife management reforms in southern African countries, institutional reforms are 'largely dependent on state authorities' patronage interests, which in turn are shaped by the relative economic value of wildlife, the degree of central control over commercial utilization, and the accountability of governance institutions'. Despite their often contrasting perspectives, these theoretical approaches all emphasize the importance of carefully considering the incentives of people engaging in corrupt practices, including for the sake of designing more effective anti-corruption policies.

POWER, CORRUPTION AND RESOURCES: INSIGHTS FROM POLITICAL ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

Through its empirical dependence on cross-national governance and development indicators, the resource curse literature has often lent itself to historical generalizations and thin conceptualizations of the role of uneven power relations in deepening resource dependence and socio-economic inequities. The notion of patronage politics, for instance, is sometimes invoked within the register of the 'rentier state' theory to explain selective resource revenue allocation and the consolidation of political regimes. Yet the socio-economic relations explaining a particular formation of patronage networks in a given setting tend not to be investigated, despite holding high relevance for understanding how corruption influences broad societal development. It is here, we argue, that political ecology provides a valuable analytical lens to explain the interplay of uneven power relations with natural resource sectors, including through various forms of corrupt practices. As Robbins (2000: 424) argues, corruption is 'a system of normalized rules, transformed from legal authority, patterned around existing inequalities, and cemented through cooperation and trust'. Building on theories positing corruption as an institution (Perry 1997), and his own in-depth case study of the influence of uneven power relations over resource use in forested areas of rural Southern India, Robbins (2000) concludes that corruption frequently is the rule of access to resources, not an exception. Such an institutional perspective enables analyses to focus on the 'rules in use' (Ostrom 1990), rather than seeing practices as aberrations from prescribed models. It also allows a focus on social relations, and their transformations, particularly uneven power relations and their interplay with resource use and environmental change (Scoones 2009).

Power is a core concept in political ecology (Wolf 1972; Bryant 1998), given the latter's preoccupation with relationships between the environment and society. It is also one of the most contested notions in the social sciences (Hall et al. 2011). Initially drawing from historical materialism (Mann 2009), conceptions of power across political ecology studies have especially drawn on Foucauldian understandings of power as relational and intimately linked to forms of knowledge. In this vein, Ribot and Peluso (2003) have cast power as the 'ability to benefit from things', serving to organize how people gain access to the things they need to sustain life. For Hall et al. (2011) power relations over resources are intimately linked to exclusionary practices articulated through the interplay of regulation, force, the market, and forms of legitimation. More generally, political ecology approaches also seek to decipher uneven power relations and the processes through which values flow from particular landscapes, through local and transnational institutions and actors, towards distant sites of accumulation and more prosperous nations (Robbins 2012). Returning to the notion of corruption in natural resource sectors, the language of power relations remains seldom explicitly used in contemporary corruption literature (but see for example Brockington 2008). The benefit of applying political ecology lies notably in the nuanced understandings and explicit vocabulary of power that it offers for the study of corruption. By allowing researchers to specify the who and how of natural resource governance 'in use' across multiple scales and boundaries, political ecology offers rich pathways for enhancing understandings of corruption that can challenge or complement existing knowledge found in the resource curse literature.

A COLLECTION OF CASE STUDIES ACROSS RESOURCE SECTORS

This volume consists of a collection of thirteen case studies providing nuanced and policy-relevant analyses of corruption within natural resource sectors. The first half of this collection looks at corruption processes related to extractive sectors, while the second half looks at other sectors, including fisheries, biofuel, forestry, and urban land. Most of the authors contribute insights and empirical evidence from field-research specifically focused on corruption, while others draw from broader resource governance research projects. All contributors were invited to reflect on the framing provided by the resource curse paradigm and to consider the contribution of a political ecology approach more sensitive to local contexts and the importance of uneven power relations on 'corrupt' forms of access and control over resource sectors.

These case studies start with a focus on extractive sectors, and the idea that oil wealth tends to undermine democratic transition – one of the central tenets of the resource curse paradigm. Inge Amundsen takes a closer look at the political process that unfolded during the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria (Chapter 1 this volume). Viewed by many as the quintessential resource cursed country, experiencing high levels of oil sector corruption, embezzlement and capital flight, Nigeria nonetheless underwent a democratic transition with its March 2015 elections. The explanation for this puzzle partly lies, Amundsen argues, in the recent fall in oil prices and related government revenues, which limited patronage spending before the elections. Applying a political ecology lens to the case, however, also points towards deeper explanations: the costs and benefits of Nigerian oil extraction have been very unevenly distributed, allowing the formation of new, and the destruction of old, political alliances.

The resource curse literature also frequently mentions Norway as a rare case of successful governance among oil exporters. Reflecting on this, Birthe Eriksen and Tina Søreide ask whether the sector also exports its 'zero-tolerance to corruption' attitude in its overseas ventures (Chapter 2 this volume). Using data from three major prosecuted cases involving bribery of foreign public officials, two of them in the petroleum sector, Eriksen and Søreide argue that international pressure and conventions, as well as a proactive approach among domestic law enforcement, is forcing Norwegian firms to adapt to a new anti-corruption regime. While firms continue to meet extortionate demands for illegal payments, bribery has become far riskier and managers know they can face personal liability.

Still, ongoing evaluation of Norway's anti-corruption commitments should expand to include an assessment of its foreign policy objectives.

Resource discoveries often result in expectations of rapid growth, but also major concerns for increasing corruption. The resource curse literature puts a strong emphasis on the need to build capable and robust institutions in anticipation of resource windfalls; an emphasis that received much policy attention in the cases of Africa's 'new oil producers' such as Chad and Ghana. In the context of Tanzania's recent offshore gas field discoveries, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad and Jesper Johnsøn demonstrate that uncoordinated public policy and a lack of regulation on lobbyism are important challenges for petroleum governance (Chapter 3 this volume). The Tanzanian government failed to reach a unified, coordinated policy position and bureaucratic competition was rife. Citizens in general felt bypassed in the process of developing three new petroleum laws, while local businesses and the local chapter of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) came out ahead in the 'lobby game'. Interestingly, MNCs did not actively lobby at the legislative level but exerted influence via their technical expertise within the government administration. Existing literature on the resource curse has so far not examined how policy coordination and lobbyism matter for petroleum governance. The authors argue that existing models for analysing the behaviour of interest groups need modifications to explain how lobbyism works in a country like Tanzania.

Transparency and public accountability are core concepts in anti-corruption policies. In their study of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Päivi Lujala and Levon Epremian challenge the assumption that increasing transparency and informing the public about natural resource revenues will lead to more equitable revenue management (Chapter 4 this volume). A key reason behind this is the way concepts of 'the public' and 'the citizen' are understood in anti-corruption discourse. As Lujala and Epremian show, policy and practice initiatives that cast people's action, or lack of it, mainly as behavioural problems should more carefully consider how people manoeuvre within structures that may prevent collective action for change, and what can be done about it, rather than relying on the hope that transparency and public information will in themselves bring about effective forms of accountability.

Much of the corruption related to resource sectors occurs at the level of revenue allocation. In a first chapter dealing with this aspect, Kendra E. Dupuy examines the case of community development funds drawing from resource revenues that are increasingly used to address issues of revenue distribution and local development in resource production regions (Chapter 5 this volume). Comparing two West African mining revenue distribution policies, Ghana's Mineral Development Fund and Sierra Leone's Diamond Area Community Development Fund, Dupuy shows how local elite capture coupled with limited transparency and accountability, led to fund misuse and embezzlement. Though such funds are usually established with good intentions, their ability to uplift mining communities through improved incomes, social services and infrastructure tend to be undermined by local power dynamics. Dupuy suggests that institutional reforms need to recognize the vulnerability of community-based natural resource management programmes to capture by local elites, which requires such schemes to be informed in the first place by a nuanced analysis of local power relations within and around communities.

In a second chapter focusing on revenue allocation, Grizelda Mayo-Anda provides a detailed account of biased budgetary processes in the Philippines, explaining the misuse of provincial royalty funds from the Malampaya natural gas project in Palawan (Chapter 6 this volume). She explains how the combination of massive royalty funds and institutional context influenced biased funding choices by local government. A public inquiry into the Malampaya scandal demonstrated the vulnerabilities of existing governance arrangements to undue political and personal interests. Mayo-Anda concludes by reflecting on the importance of alternative and strategic mechanisms of natural resource revenue sharing that can prevent funds from falling prey to the self-interest of local politicians.

Mostly focused on extractive sectors, the resource curse literature has more rarely engaged with other resource sectors – in contrast with political ecology, which has given greater attention to corrupt processes within fisheries, forestry, biofuels, the wildlife trade, and land. In their sweeping and insightful review of corruption risks in fisheries, Ussif Rashid Sumaila, Jennifer Jacquet and Allison Witter point at the effects of corruption on marine environments, global food security, national economies and local livelihoods in coastal communities (Chapter 7 this volume). Undermining management goals and eroding local incentives for responsible resource stewardship, corrupt practices within this sector are difficult to address. A raft of measures for improving oversight and management control have been proposed, but gaps in their implementation and loopholes in even the best monitoring systems mean it is difficult to address all types of corruption threatening fish stocks. Solutions may lie in strengthening fisher participation in management to improve compliance and legitimacy at local levels, as well as the identification of beneficiaries of corrupt practices all along the commodity chain bringing fish to consumers.

Green economic policies are not immune to corrupt practices. While corruption can undermine the implementation of a 'green agenda', green policies can themselves also be instrumented for corrupt purposes. Reflecting on the small but growing literature on the 'green resource curse', and drawing from fieldwork on the illegal trade in forest products in Kenya and the broader East Africa region, Connor Joseph Cavanagh confirms that increased financing for green initiatives threatens to replicate problems in the extractive industries (Chapter 8 this volume). He also argues they hold potential to fuel clandestine forest destruction and further marginalize indigenous forest dwellers. The struggles of these communities suggest that the antidote to a green resource curse in Kenya does not simply rely on supporting improved governance and the rule of law – measures that can often be circumvented with relative ease – but depends too on locally rooted movements for environmental justice.

Strengthening formal control and oversight institutions is a common policy prescription for addressing corruption in natural resource sectors and escaping from the resource curse. Reflecting on two recent biofuel land deals in Ghana, Festus Boamah and Aled Williams problematize this approach and argue that contested notions of land entitlements provide leeway for powerful local actors to re-invent customs aimed at justifying the appropriation of valuable resources at the expense of weaker groups (Chapter 9 this volume). In Ghana, where rival institutions jostle for authority to control natural resources, generating desirable outcomes requires more than tightening existing controls or creating new regulations. Collaborative approaches are needed where the limits of powers and specific roles of different actors are clearly defined in new political settlements.

Community-based natural resource management approaches are frequently presented as a way to increase local representation in decision-making processes and reduce the risks of corruption. Revisiting a well-known 'success story' of community-based forest management in Tanzania, Joseph Perfect Mrema reflects on the effects of the capture of such projects by local elites (Chapter 10 this volume). Based on data collected in three Tanzanian villages between 2009 and 2015, Perfect Mrema observes that, despite being structurally designed to conserve dwindling resources, community-based conservation programmes ended up being captured by patronage and collusive networks. Contrasting with evaluations considering this project a success, these findings point at the importance of longitudinal evaluations sensitive to intra-community power relations.

Political transitions are often rife with corruption, and aid conditionality is occasionally deployed to stop corrupt logging practices amidst electoral processes. In his powerful story of the resurgent trade in rosewood in northeastern Madagascar, Oliver Remy explains how a group of local timber traders leveraged illicit wealth to become elected members of Madagascar's Fourth Republic (Chapter 11 this volume). Their influence over national forest policies paved the way for continued rosewood exploitation despite the government repeatedly agreeing to a logging moratorium, notably in exchange for foreign aid.

Corruption often thrives in contexts of prohibition. Tanya Wyatt outlines the corrupt actors along the smuggling chain of the illegal wildlife trade, showing how various forms of corruption are employed to launder and hide wildlife whilst buying off and/or deceiving law enforcement agencies (Chapter 12 this volume). As a multi-stage crime straddling national boundaries and seeking to bypass domestic laws, regulations and enforcement actions, the illegal trade in wildlife is highly dependent on corruption for its success. Although research on this topic is still fairly limited, emerging case evidence suggests a combination of approaches is required, including initiatives that seek to reduce consumer demand in countries that are major importers of wildlife products, and improved policing at global transit hubs.

In the last chapter, Dieter Zinnbauer draws attention to the importance of land governance in urban settings and demonstrates the striking applicability of several major resource curse arguments to this sector (Chapter 13 this volume). Given the potential for bad urban governance to fuel kleptocratic practices, exacerbate inequalities, and further marginalize the livelihoods of billons of urban poor, more attention should be paid to cities as units of analysis, and to urban land in particular. As Zinnbauer insightfully notes, the challenges of urban land governance not only results from the sheer value of this very political resource, but also from the role played by urban land as an investment vehicle to launder the money made through illicit exploitation, corruption and tax evasion associated with other natural resource sectors.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Leite and Weidmann (1999), Mehlum et al. (2006), Robinson et al. (2006), Kolstad and Søreide (2009), Le Billon (2011, 2014).
2. According to the resource curse paradigm, countries highly dependent on revenues from exports of non-renewable natural resources tend to be characterized by poorer economic performance, lower levels of human development, and higher levels of inequality and poverty. See for example, Karl (1997), Humphreys et al. (2007), Ross (2012). Leite and Weidmann (1999: 3) first statistically demonstrated that capital intensive natural resources were a 'major determinant of corruption' (see also Busse and Gröning 2013), with corruption in turn having negative economic growth effects. Examining subnational effects

in China, Zhan (2015: 1) finds that 'resource dependence significantly increases the propensity for corruption by state employees'. Conditional findings include countries with high-quality democratic institutions (Bhattacharyya and Hodler 2010), and a reverse relation for agricultural and metal and ores exporters (Gani and Clemes 2015). Even for oil Ross (2012) cautions assertion of a systematic relationship as he finds a slightly, and statistically non-significant, improvement of corruption perception scores for oil-states compared to non oil-states during 1996–2006.

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