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Reviewed by: Roopa Madhav, PhD Scholar, SOAS, University of London

BOOK REVIEW



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Tracy-Lynn Field, *State Governance of Mining, Development and Sustainability* (Edward Elgar Publishing Limited 2019)

Mineral endowed countries struggle to balance optimal extraction of mineral resources during boom market cycles with that of protecting citizens and environment from harmful effects of such rapid extraction. These competing societal values and goals require to be mediated by the State through effective governance tools. However, in the past few decades, the State as the primary arbiter of conflicting values is increasingly supported by an industry conscious of the need for a more responsible management of extractive resources. Against this background, Tracy-Lynn Field's book, *State Governance of Mining, Development and Sustainability* provides critical insights into contemporary discourses around mining, development, and sustainability in both developed and developing countries.

Remarkably, the book covers a wide swathe of research on mining discourses bringing together literature from a broad spectrum including academic research, reports from multilateral international bodies, industry and activist groups. Divided into eight chapters, the initial chapters set up the scaffolding for the book outlining the favourable and dissenting discourses on mining, development, sustainability and the role of the state.

The competing discourses are detailed in Chapters 2 and 3 - four 'pro-mining discourses' (sustainable mineral development consensus, responsible mining, non-extractivism, and critical and strategic minerals) and five 'discourses of mining dissent' (resource curse thesis, Indigenous Peoples rights, environmental justice, mining and human rights and feminist critiques of mining). As the author notes, these discourses originate and are sustained by a variety of interest groups including industry, IFIs, industry, mining affected communities, NGOs and academics. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with mining, taxation and property; chapters 6 and 7 deal with mining, environment assessment and mining closure. The final or concluding chapter is devoted to the author's take on post extractivism tying it up with the chosen analytical frame of Polanyi's double movement theory.

The underlying thesis of the book is that this global system of "unsustainable mineral extraction" persists

because of the dynamic relationship between contending social forces advancing and resisting mining. The author picks an interesting analytical frame to examine the persistence of unsustainable mineral extraction - Polanyi's double movement theory - to argue that 'there is a dynamic relationship between contending social forces advancing and resisting mining'.¹ At its core the double movement theory argues that the interplay between two organizing principles, one aimed at establishing a self-regulating market and the other, the principle of social protection primarily aimed at conservation of man and nature, as well as productive organization, relying on the varying support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market - and using protective legislation, restrictive associations and other instruments of interests as its methods.

The book also provides a comparative perspective outlining the laws from various countries on issues of taxation, property rights, environmental assessments and mine closure, in Chapters 4 to 7. While the range of coverage is impressive and presentation of massive literature is useful from a research or academic perspective, the author does not attempt to keep the comparative exercise consistent by looking at select countries. Besides the wide range of literature - while neatly boxed into categories - is not subject to the promising analytical framing of Polanyi's double movement theory in Chapters 4 to 6. That analysis is reserved for the last concluding chapter. Inconsistent treatment of the analytical framework - it is patchy at best - makes you wonder if it is an afterthought.

1 The double movement, a concept put forward by Karl Polanyi in his 1944 work, *The Great Transformation*, stands for the conflicting principles of promoting mining but protecting society from its worst impacts. It organizes societal positions but manifests most acutely through the state. The double movement is part of Polanyi's broader explanatory framework for the emergence and persistence of the market economy and 'market society'. The market society troubled Polanyi, as he believed the fictitious commoditization of land, money and labour causes tremendous damage to society.

Ultimately, this book shows how the promotional and protective role of the State constituted by the advocacy, policies and laws of international financial institutions, industry associations, activists, and mineral-rich jurisdictions supports an unsustainable system of global mining production. Progressive in its approach, the book concludes with insightful thoughts on the paradigm of post-extractivism. It explains why the double movement is only superficially balanced and does not guard against predatory relations and practices. It shows that overcoming extractivism/neo-extractivism will necessitate a great undoing

and researchers. Its reach for practitioners and policy makers would require a more carefully edited version.

- at the level of technical frameworks that translate into legal rights and obligations;
- at the level of narratives that justify extraction with reference to other grand and globalized human quests (development, sustainability), and
- at the level of understanding how the use of minerals relates to ideas and assumptions, such as a Cartesian knowledge system, restriction of ethical values to the human sphere, the duality of society and nature and the onward march of 'progress'.

The book fails to note the inconsistency – most of the debates have been co-opted and spearheaded by the industry to stem dissent – be it the social license to contract or the discourse around sustainable or responsible mining. Civil society creating the double movement is at times a myth.

Despite the few cavils, the book is an extraordinary resource and a useful addition for an under-researched area of state governance of mineral resources. It fills a critical gap in literature as it provides the most comprehensive engagement with the wide range of critical debates around mining and sustainability. The engagement with the two difficult cross cutting themes of taxation and property rights are an extremely useful addition to the literature. The range of the coverage of critical debates around mining and key issues such as property rights, taxation, environmental assessment and mine closure are explicated in great detail making this voluminous book an ideal reader for academics

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