

WEST AFRICA'S GOLDEN FUTURE? CONFLICTS AROUND GOLD MINING IN SENEGAL

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GOLD MINING BOOM IN AFRICA

In the context of the international financial crisis, gold prices have risen to unprecedented heights. In 2011, the gold price rose up to \$ 1,896.50 per ounce, whereas 11 years earlier in 2000, it sold at \$316.60 per ounce. These dynamics have led to a new gold mining boom around the world, especially in Africa and Latin America, where investments in exploration and exploitation activities have risen significantly (UNECA 2011).

New areas are being unlocked for mining, modifying the global mining geography. South Africa has been the main African gold producer since the early 20th century; however its production levels have been declining since the early 1990s. In the past 10 years, investment in exploration and exploitation activities in West and East Africa has significantly increased. West Africa has become a major gold mining region, with Ghana now

Africa's second largest gold producer (Investing News Network 09.04.2015). Gold mining activities have also increased in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, and Senegal (World Bank, January 2012). All countries are sharing the Birimian greenstone belt.

This mining boom in West Africa has not only been driven by high gold prices but also by the liberalization of mining legislation, facilitated in many cases by the World Bank (Campbell 2010). This new generation of mining codes has been explicitly designed to attract foreign investment in the mining sector and offers large benefits to investors, such as tax breaks and low-revenue payments.

These dynamics of large-scale land transformation for mining purposes are highly contested. Conflicts have sparked around the new gold mining projects in many of the emerging gold mining countries, such as Burkina Faso (Engels 2015, Engels forthcoming), Guinea (Bolay 2014), Ghana (Okoh 2014, Anyidoho/Crawford 2014) and Senegal. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations are important actors mobilizing in conflicts over the expansion of mining into new territories (Bebbington et al. 2008, pp. 901–3). Social movements and civil society alliances have organized against large-scale mining all over the world (Bebbington/Bury 2013), with issues ranging from environmental concerns, to human rights and revenue distribution.

In West Africa, large social movements against mining are so far relatively absent from the protest scene. In contrast, a major point in conflict is the competition for gold between artisanal and small-scale miners and large-scale mining companies (e.g. Engels forthcoming, Okoh 2014), in particular in countries with a long tradition of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and a newly-emerging industrial mining economy. Artisanal and small-scale mining refers to the "labor-intensive, low-tech mineral exploration and processing" of gold (Hilson 2011, pp. 1032). In this paper, I aim to identify how the livelihood activities of artisanal and small-scale mining shape conflict over large-scale mining.

GOLD MINING IN SENEGAL: REMAKING A REGION

Senegal is a typical case of an emerging African goldmining country. The mining industry was poorly developed until the beginning of the 2000s, with phosphates being the only resource that was mined on a large scale. The only attempt at large-scale gold mining in Senegal was undertaken by EXIMCOR in the 1990s, a state-led project which failed due to disputes over financing. In 2003, the government of former President Abdoulaye Wade introduced a new mining code, offering major benefits to investors, such as tax and custom-duty exemptions as well as revenue payments of only three percent (Code minier, Loi n° 2003-36, 24 November 2003). The liberalization of the mining law and rising gold prices have proven to be significant incentives for large and medium-scale companies, such as Randgold or Teranga Gold, as well as junior exploration companies, speculating in mining licenses, to invest in Senegal. Gold mining in Senegal is taking place in the region of Kédougou, a poor and sparsely populated region bordering Mali and Guinea, about 800 km South-East from the capital Dakar.

A little more than 10 years after the liberalization of Senegal's mining code, almost the entire area of the region of Kédougou was covered with exploration licenses. Fifty-five exploration licenses and three mining concessions for gold were granted to about forty different companies (ASND April 2015). Senegal's first industrial gold mine, the Sabodala Gold Mine, produced its first ingot in 2009. The mine is today owned by the Canadian company Teranga Gold Corporation (TGO). TGO holds (via its Senegalese subsidiaries Sabodala Gold Operations and Sabodala Mining Company) a mining permit for 246 km² and exploration licenses for over 1,000 km² (Teranga Gold Corporation 2013). From 2013 to 2015 Teranga produced between 5 and 6 tons of gold annually. Two more companies, Toro Gold and Randgold, have announced they will start gold extraction in 2017. This has drastically changed the economy and politics of Kédougou and of the Senegalese state as a

whole. Traditionally Senegal's only mining industry has been phosphate mining, as phosphates have been mined in Senegal since the 1940s. The country is one of the most important phosphate producers in the world (ITIE 2013). However, in 2013 phosphoric acid only accounted for about 6 % of total export value while gold exports accounted for about 12.3%, or 329 Million US-\$(UNCTAD 2014). The development of the gold industry has become a top priority in the government's development agenda (ANSD 2013).

The gold deposits in Kédougou have not only attracted international companies, but also vast numbers of small-scale and artisanal miners who migrated from neighboring countries to Senegal. ASM has a long history in the Kédougou region, as in most other West-African countries on the Birimian belt. In fact, it is not unusual that companies focus their exploration activities based on the presence of artisanal and small-scale miners (Luning 2014). Gold has been mined artisanally in Senegal since pre-colonial times. Artisanal mining has traditionally been practiced by the local population as an additional livelihood activity next to agriculture and pastoralism in the dry season, mainly in the form of gold panning of surface sands along river streams (Niang 2014). However, driven by the high gold prices and the lack of efficient regulation of ASM by the Senegalese Government, tens of thousands of migrants from other West-African countries have travelled to Kédougou in search of gold. Their exact number is unknown, nor is the amount of gold they mine. However, Senegalese local artisanal and small-scale miners as well as NGO activists estimate that, between 15,000 and 50,000 people are living and working at some of the larger ASM sites such as Kharakhena or Tenkoto. As one artisanal miner at Kharakhena put it: "We have the whole ECOWAS at Kharakhena now, Ghanaians, Burkinaabé, Guineans, Malians, Nigerians, Ivorians...". The son of the village chief adds that "10 years ago, there were only 10 or 15 huts in Kharakhena" (focus group discussion, Kharakhena, 13 April 2016). The exponential growth of these villages is thereby not only due to the miners themselves. They bring along their families, while other people join the mining sites to open up businesses attending to the consumer needs of the miners. Some people opened up little restaurants or sell vegetables along the street. Again, others open shops, organize transportation for people and goods and sell and repair mining equipment (site visit Kharakhena, 13 April 2016, Diallo et al. 2016). In short, people developed several economic activities around the larger mining sites. Furthermore local village chiefs profit from ASM as they get a fixed quantity of the ore-bearing rock extracted on the village's territory.

ASM in Senegal has not only developed in size, but also in mining techniques and know-how. Migrants brought mining-specific know-how to Senegal. Today many artisanal and small-scale miners are equipped with metal detectors, electrical pumps to free their mining holes from ground water, and jack hammers. ASM holes have been reported to reach depths of up to 80 meters; however the average depth at the bigger mining sites seems to vary between 20 and 40 meters (Diallo et al. 2016). Chemicals such as mercury and cyanide are widely used to separate gold from stone. Senegalese state officials have therefore described ASM in Senegal as semi-industrial exploitations, having little in common with the image of manual gold panning evoked by the term artisanal mining (interview, Forestry Department, 03 March 2015).

STRUGGLING FOR LIVELIHOODS

The installation of the first large-scale gold mine in Senegal run by TGO has not gone unchallenged. Conflicts have arisen around several issues. These include compensation payments, employment, fair distribution of revenues between national state and local municipalities and health issues, especially related to the increase of dust.

In December 2008, Kédougou's population made itself heard for the first time, when a student-led protest in the regional capital Kédougou turned violent, leaving one person dead and several government buildings

burned down. The protest was led on account of the persisting poverty in their home locality and the lack of job creation throughout the gold mining industry (Foucher 2009).

However, one recurring issue that has sparked the most violent conflicts since the mine entered into production is the closing down of the artisanal and small-scale mining sites on the TGO concession. In 2015, TGO started developing its first satellite deposit, the so-called Gora deposit. Gora was one of the richest ASM mining sites in the area. The first attempts to close down the mining site led to clashes between police and local miners in 2010 and 2011, leading to several arrests (interview, spokesperson of the villages surrounding Gora, 05 March 2015, 04 May 2016). When TGO applied for a mining concession for Gora in 2014 and held the required consultations for the environmental and social impact study, local villagers boycotted the consultation-related interviews and public hearings. They claim that the Environmental and Social Impact Study was finally validated by different villages from the municipality that are at some 20 km away from the actual mining site (interview, spokesperson of the villages surrounding Gora, 05. March 2015, 04 May 2016; NGO La Lumière, 08 April 2016). To date, local miners refuse to fully vacate the site and keep on descending into the pit to recover some ore containing stones and treat these at the village (interview, spokesperson of the villages surrounding Gora, 04 May 2016).

The villages closest to the Sabodala Gold Mine, Sabodala and Faloumbou lost their main ASM sites to the company. TGO is either using the land for its open pits or to place its debris. In February 2016, the police and TGO closed down a newly-discovered ASM site on lands rented out to the village of Faloumbou by TGO for agricultural purposes. This was followed by two days of street blockades and gatherings and clashes with the police in front of the sub-prefecture in the village of Sabodala. The miners destroyed several TGO machines as well as the car of the sub-prefecture in Sabodala.

I argue that the conflicts around the TGO mine are best understood as conflicts over livelihoods. Livelihood “refers to the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets and intangible assets” (Chambers 1995, pp. 174). ASM is an integral part of the livelihoods of the villages surrounding the TGO mine. Since the start of the mining boom in the mid-2000s, it has become the central livelihood activity for many households. Agricultural activity, formerly the main source of income to many households, diminished significantly in the past years (ANSD April 2015). If local miners lose their sites, they have very limited options to shift their mining activities elsewhere since gold mining is place-bound. High-grade gold deposits are usually found in small and restricted areas, and industrial mining and ASM often compete for the same gold deposits (Luning 2014). Even though the industrial exploitation of gold usually starts at a deeper level than the ASM extraction, the locality of the extraction is the same for both types of extraction and the activities are for the most part mutually-exclusive. Local miners cannot shift their activities to a different place easily, since gold first needs to be found. Furthermore, the increasing expansion of TGO to three open-pits currently means that the villages are more and more encircled by the mining activity, leaving no space for ASM sites close to the Sabodala Gold Mine (interviews of miners from the Sabodala village, 09 and 10 April 2016, La Lumière 12 April 2016). Artisanal and small-scale miners therefore cannot easily shift their activities to different localities. Furthermore, the quantities of gold available are limited. Artisanal and small-scale miners therefore cannot easily shift mining to a different site to make up for the mining pits they lost to TGO.

Intensification of existing livelihoods and migration, in this case to a different site, are typical strategies of rural poor people when their livelihoods are under threat (Scoones 1998 p. 9). Since both strategies are not very attractive options, most local miners prefer livelihood diversification. However, this proves difficult as well, as villages close to the mining site have lost large parts of their agricultural lands to TGO. Moreover, revenues from agriculture are considerably lower than from ASM due to the lack of irrigation systems and agricultural inputs, rendering this an unattractive option from the beginning. Therefore, employment in the mine or in mine-related enterprises is the favorite option for livelihood diversification (focus group discussion, Sabodala village, 04 March 2015, Faloumbou village, 04 March 2015). TGO is the largest employer in the re-

gion, with close to 1,000 employees, and it gives priority to laborers from the surrounding villages. However, 60 percent of the Teranga staff come from regions other than Kédougou or from different countries (Teranga Gold Corporation 2013). Lack of employment opportunities is one of the most frequent grievances by local populations. Gold mining is not a very labor intensive form of mining and offers particularly few employment opportunities for unskilled manual workers. Unlike coal or iron ore extraction, gold mining requires little in terms of infrastructure, such as railways or paved roads. In the TGO mine, gold is exported directly from the mining site via aircraft. Road construction has therefore remained marginal, mainly to connect different gold deposits to the processing plant. Furthermore, subcontractors often come from Dakar, instead of Kédougou, and much of the machinery is imported and not produced in Senegal (interview, mayor of Kédougou, 24 February 2015). The Sabodala Gold Mine therefore resembles an enclave economy, where physical backward and forward linkages to the national and regional economy are missing (Hirschman 1958). Thus, after construction of the production plant was completed, there has been little need for manual labor in the mine and little opportunity for the local population to make an alternative livelihood from economic activities connected to the TGO mine.

Conflicts between local artisanal and small-scale miners and industrial mining companies do not solely emerge from the mere loss of ASM sites, but also from the loss of livelihoods caused by the lack of valid alternatives. Local miners are spatially constrained by the presence of gold and the advancement of TGO on their former mining territories. This makes adaptation of their ASM livelihood difficult. At the same time, employment as an opportunity to diversify their livelihoods is only open to a few of them.

THE PERSISTENT INFORMAL NATURE OF ASM MINING

Artisanal and small-scale mining is largely done informally in Senegal. This makes it difficult for local artisanal and small-scale miners to fight for their mining territories in an institutionalized way. In Senegal, as in most countries, ownership of subsoil resources is directly vested in the State. Mining concessions are negotiated and attributed by the national government. The process of giving out concessions offers little opportunities for local villagers to protest against mining concessions on their land or to defend their interests. They are only consulted as part of the Environmental and Social Impact Study at a late stage of the licensing process and often have no prior knowledge about the planning of large-scale mining activities on their territories (interviews La Lumière 06 March 2015, Regional Development Service 03 March 2015).

ASM is illegal on concession land, but not illegal *per se* in Senegal. However, only few artisanal miners have obtained an artisanal mining permit so far (ASND April 2015). The vast majority is mining informally. Since 2014, the Senegalese government has made increased efforts to reorganize the ASM sector. All ASM sites were closed down in 2014. The national government introduced restricted corridors for ASM at the beginning of 2015. The ASM sites lying within these corridors were reopened, the others remained closed. To be allowed to mine in these corridors, miners need to buy an artisanal mining pass (*carte d'orpailleur*). These passes are only available to Senegalese national citizens and cost 5000 CFA (ca. 7.50 €). However, since there are no corridors on industrial mining concessions, the villages surrounding the TGO mine do not have any corridor close to them. Furthermore, many local miners complain that the corridors are assigned in areas where no gold can be found (interview focus group, Kharakhena, 13 April 2016). Since most artisanal and small scale miners have no formal land rights and their activity is illegal on mining concessions, the local population surrounding the TGO mine has very little institutionalized means to prevent the loss of ASM sites. Due to the informal nature of the activity, no compensation is paid for the loss of ASM sites, and no alternative sites are provided to continue the activities.

DIFFICULT ALLIANCES FOR ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE MINERS

The conflicts over the closure of ASM sites mainly took the form of largely spontaneous and weakly organized protests. They remained at a local level with little attempts to link the local struggles to wider nationally contested issues. Some Kédougou-based NGOs got involved in the conflict around the TGO mine (see Table 1 for an overview of Senegalese civil society actors active in the gold mining sector). La Lumière, SADEV and KEOH support local populations in their demands. However, they take a cooperative stand towards the mining companies and position themselves as mediators between the companies and the local population (interview KEOH, 14 April 2016; La Lumière, 08 April 2016; SADEV, 19 April 2016). These NGOs were only founded in the mid-2000s. They are expert and development NGOs, which have little mobilization capacity and lack linkages with other civil society organizations. Collaborations so far have mainly consisted of a largely donor-driven alliance under the banner of the *Publishwhatyoupay* coalition. However, *Publishwhatyoupay* mainly pushes for changes at the level of national legislation and has not directly supported local struggles so far.

Other actors, who have been very vocal in struggles around large-scale mining in different contexts such as environmental NGOs, human rights NGOs or the peasant movement have so far been absent from the conflicts around the TGO mine. Senegal has a vibrant civil society scene, with strong human rights, environmental and peasant organizations. The peasant movement, which recently reorganized as the network Cadre de Réflexion et d'Action sur le Foncier au Sénégal (CRAFS), has strong ties with rural areas but its focus lies on supporting small-scale agriculture and contesting land grabbing for agro-industrial purposes (Prause 2014). Their link to artisanal and small-scale miners is therefore marginal.

Moreover, the strong negative environmental effects of ASM make it difficult for local miners to forge alliances with environmental NGOs. Even NGOs such as La Lumière that work closely with artisanal and small-scale miners frequently stress the negative environmental impacts of ASM (interview La Lumière, 06 March 2015). Dakar-based organizations such as ENDA LEAD or the Comité Sénégalais des droits humains (CSDH), which started engaging with the mining sector, presented large-scale mining as the environmentally cleaner alternative. As a representative of ENDA LEAD explained: "Artisanal mining is a lot more problematic than industrial exploitations, (...) there is a bigger impact on the environment than from the enterprises. At least they have to respect a certain set of rules, you don't have this in traditional artisanal mining" (interview ENDA LEAD, 22 February 2015, translated from French by the author). An argument also frequently used by Senegalese state authorities (interviews Forestry Department, 03 March 2015; Regional Development Service, 03. March 2015).

Human rights organizations have so far formed the most vocal alliances with the villagers surrounding the mine outside of Kédougou. They contest the dispossession and displacement caused by large-scale mining (Amnesty International 2014). Their support for local populations in terms of securing access to ASM sites however is limited, since child labor and other human rights abuses in small-scale mining are frequent (Hilson 2008). This lack of powerful allies explains the difficulty for local miners to bring their claims to the national level, or to stage organized and long-term protest on the local level.

CONCLUSION

The gold rush starting in the mid-2000s had a profound impact on the Senegalese gold mining region of Kédougou and the national economy as a whole. In Kédougou large tracts of land have been or will be transformed for large-scale mining. These dynamics are highly contested. The main line of conflict in the gold mining sector runs between local artisanal and small-scale miners and the industrial corporations. These conflicts are best understood as conflicts over livelihoods. Therefore, it is not only the immediate loss of ASM sites that

sparks conflict, but the lack of alternative livelihood options in the form of employment or intensified agricultural activities. ASM is largely done informally. Local miners rarely hold mining permits, and ASM is illegal on mining concessions. Institutional means for the miners living in the villages around the TGO mine to secure their main source of income are therefore almost nonexistent. So far, protest around large-scale gold mining in Senegal has largely taken the form of weakly-organized local protest. This can be explained by the difficulties for local miners and the NGOs working with them to form alliances with broader social movements in Senegal.

To resolve these ongoing conflicts between small-scale and large-scale mining, spokespersons of the villages surrounding the mine and local NGOs first point to the responsibility of the State and TGO to provide alternative livelihood options, mainly in the form of big agricultural projects. To realize this, local mayors demand that a fair share of the revenues paid to the national government should be redistributed to local communities in the mining area (interview, Mayor of Sabodala, 08 April 2016, Mayor of Khossanto, 10 April 2016). Secondly, they propose a sustainable employment policy by TGO. This includes the establishment of education and training centers for the local youth, which would enable them to find jobs in the mining industry in the future (interview, focus group Faloumbou, focus group Sabodala, 04 March 2015). Third, the villages demand a fair compensation mechanism for ASM sites, including cash transfers and alternative lands for mining that needs to be prospected beforehand by the mining company to prove that gold can be found. They argue that even though they do not hold formal land titles and mining permits, they hold traditional rights to the land. It was not only used for generations by their families, they argue, but it was also they who discovered the gold and made the corporations come to the area. "They are only here because of us" is a frequent claim in the villages surrounding the mine (Interview, focus group, Sabodala, 04 March 2015, spokesperson for six villages around Gora, 04 May 2016).

On the one hand, conflicts in the gold mining sector in Senegal show the difficulties for local populations to profit from large-scale extractive projects in their regions. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the organization of marginalized groups in remote mining areas is a particular challenge in the new African mining economies. The emergence of broad anti-mining movements in West Africa, as we have witnessed them in many Latin American countries, is therefore unlikely in the near future. In this context a way forward for critical political work on mining could be through the support of network formations between critical national, regional and international experts and, if they exist, grassroots organizations on mining. This might advance the "watch-dog positions" of national NGOs in terms of their capacity to alert the national and international media. It might also lead to a transfer of different repertoires of contentions, providing local organizations with the necessary knowledge to enact new forms of protest (for a successful example from Colombia, see Dietz forthcoming).

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