

Enclaving, Re-enclaving and Disenclaving: Conceiving a political ecology of agrarian and extractive patterns in Southern Africa

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Introduction

The search for decolonised solutions to Africa's developmental problems spans across many domains including institutionalism, epistemology, and natural resources governance. For extractible (mineral) and unextractable (land) natural resources, their colonial appropriation occurred under exclusionary extractive or production enclaves. These enclaves have weak direct linkages of proceeds with the broad national economy in which extraction or production occurs (Emerson, 1982). Accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003), development induced displacements and resettlements (Stanley, 2004; Terminski, 2013) are some of the conceptual framings under which a corpus of literature exists explaining and analysing the ensuing conflicts emergent from the unequally distributed natural resources benefits under enclaved conditions. While these do justice in communicating the political economy and ecology of natural resources governance and ensuing conflicts, less emphasis is placed on the evolving territorial formations, contestations and (re)configurations that produce enclaves in the (dis)possessive matrix of these natural resources following historical patterns. Lesser emphasis is resultantly placed on the nexus of institutions, laws, underlying governance cultures, knowledge cultures (epistemes) and discourses of development under which enclaves are continuously (dis)-enabled across physical and time boundaries. The decolonisation of natural resources governance is least attended yet currently the governance and resultant conflicts emerging from negotiations, contestations, and reconfigurations of enclaves, draw governance inspiration and logics of the colonial turn.

Scope

Different authors note that colonial capitalism in many African countries sliced out and formalised a small section of the economy, leaving the rest under pre-capitalist production modes, creating a duality (Kanyenze and Chitambara, n.d.). Amidst this duality, inherited by African states like Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia, the growth momentum of the formal sector organizes the highly productive informal peripheries rich in mineral resources and agricultural land as exclusionary zones of intensified raw materials production and extraction, enclaves. For mining, the capital intensiveness, the "remote" location of mineral deposits and other factors explains for economists why grand promises by post-colonial governments to create national equitable economies that dismantled the enclaves (dis-enclaving) have failed. But these are not the only reasons for the failures to disenclave. Despite the interests and attempts to disenclave and end the ensuing natural resources conflicts (land and minerals) that ignited the anticolonial liberation struggles, the failure to reform institutions like the governing of mineral resources in a post-colonial state with pre-colonial law regimes have perpetuated in Zimbabwe and a select of other countries. In some instances, laws are passed in the present to reconfigure

the productive and extractive spaces using pre-colonial epistemic inspirations, expanding old and or creating new enclaves (enclaving), dismantling old (disenclaving) and reigniting old ones (re-enclaving).

Enclaving - A Conceptual Proposition

“Enclaving” can function as a conceptual lens which can be traced over space and time conflict-laden socioeconomic and environmental conditions of society by looking at ongoing and possibly predicting future cycles of enclaving (the birth of an entirely new productive or extractive enclave), disenclaving (the termination of an enclave) and re-enclaving (the revival of an enclave previously terminated). I draw inspiration from the ongoing governance processes for selected extractive and production resources that are at different states of or have historically undergone cycles of enclaving, re-enclaving and disenclaving in three specific sites in Zimbabwe. Ethnographic studies of three different natural resources (“estate” agricultural land, black granite, and coal) will be central to my inquiry. This conceptualisation will answer the question: What and how do the nexus of evolving institutions, their history and laws, underlying governance cultures, knowledge cultures (episteme) and discourses of development surrounding natural resources produce, end, and reproduce enclaved configurations of society and their ensuing conflicts?

A preliminary finding shows that in the three stated processes of enclaving, conflicts often become multi-layered, successive and some, intractable (Coleman, 2003; Gray et al., 2007). A possible central conclusive notion is that “enclaving”, the conditions under which it occurs and the complexity of conflicts ensuing out of it, are all manifestations of a much more complex nexus of factors (governmentality, laws, economic interests, ideologies, and epistemologies to name a few) that travel through territory and time than is captured under existing concepts.

Key words: Enclaving, disenclaving, re-enclaving, natural resources governance, conflict

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