

Why do conflicts over natural resources persist despite increased resource revenue? To explore this question, this *In Brief* connects the ideas of Nancy Fraser (2009) to sources of conflict in Bougainville. The ideas presented offer a new way of understanding what appear to be intractable disputes over resource exploitation in Melanesia. I use Fraser's analytical distinctions between recognition, redistribution and representation to challenge understandings of the causes of armed conflict over natural resources as motivated either by 'greed' or 'grievance' (Collier & Hoeffler 2004). Interest in this topic stems from my research on corporate social responsibility (CSR), resource conflict and peace-building in Bougainville and West Papua, particularly the types of justice claims that extractive companies might seek to address through CSR policies and practices.

In her text *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, Fraser (2009) outlines a three-dimensional theory of justice. Justice is defined as 'parity of participation' requiring 'social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life' (Fraser 2009, 16). Building on her prior theorising of recognition and redistribution Fraser (2009, 16) identifies three obstacles to participatory parity, each representing a distinct species of injustice and an associated remedy. The first is economic — rooted in the economic structures of society, such as class structures or the uneven distribution of resource wealth. The associated remedy is the redistribution of material resources. The second injustice is cultural, and stems from what Fraser refers to as 'institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value'. The remedy is recognition. The third is political, where marginalised groups experience an unequal voice in public deliberations. The remedy is representation. Fraser acknowledges that, in practice, these three obstacles are intertwined, and her work is perhaps most recognisable for the contradictions she highlights when groups claim redistribution and recognition simultaneously — in particular,

concurrent demands made by social movements for equality and recognition of difference.

In my research on CSR, I have been drawn to Fraser's theory of justice to consider why it is that resource conflicts are continuing to emerge under improved conditions of 'socially responsible resource extraction' (Gilberthorpe & Banks 2012, 186) due to the more serious uptake of CSR by the extractives sector. I'm also intrigued by the belief of scholars such as Michael Watts who argue that an increase in resource revenue allocation is unlikely to have positive development effects in areas such as Nigeria (Watts & Arsel 2009, 1201).

A possible explanation for the limitations of CSR in preventing and resolving conflict over natural resources may be that the methods deployed by extractive companies privilege the distribution of cash payments and community development infrastructure, without an adequate engagement with the links between resource development, cultural marginalisation and political exclusion. While material resources are far from inconsequential and extractive companies play important developmental roles, conflicts associated with natural resources are often characterised not just by demands for increased wealth and infrastructure, but by claims for recognition and political representation. For example, there are also concerns for the viability of cultures, the politicisation of identity, as well as isolation from a nation's capital. In considering possible methods for the prevention and resolution of conflicts over natural resources, it may, therefore, be necessary to consider ways to expand the distributive paradigm to also include cultural or symbolic recognition and political inclusivity.

An illustrative example is Bougainville, where armed conflict is closely entwined with mining-related grievances. Anthony Regan argues the origins of the conflict stemmed from complaints relating to mining revenue distribution and preferential employment treatment by two main groups of Bougainvilleans: 1) customary landowners of land leased to Bougainville Copper Limited

(BCL), and 2) young Bougainvillean mine workers (2010, 17–18). Regan offers two explanations for the intensity of emotion these grievances generated. Firstly, the Australian colonial officials at the time of exploration and initial establishment of the mine engaged inadequately with the clan lineages who owned the land on the mine lease areas. The second was a failure to increase rent and compensation payments, once the mine was operational, taking into account population growth within these clans over the life of the mine. Referring back to Fraser's model of justice, the former might be considered a claim for recognition and the latter as a claim for redistribution, although the two are difficult to disentangle and there may be a dynamic interplay between them.

Exploring these grievances using Fraser's model, what appear on the surface as 'greed' or 'profit seeking' motives, as in Collier's formulation, can actually represent a claim for recognition or respect, and vice versa. For example, if we were to map Regan's (2010) understanding of the origins of the Bougainville conflict according to Fraser's 'three species of justice', it becomes evident that claims for recognition (e.g. as the original owners of the land) can shift into claims for redistribution (e.g. increased compensation payments).

For instance, initially working separately towards their own goals, the two groups of Bougainvilleans began to collaborate around the belief that Bougainvilleans as the original owners of the land should be afforded special recognition by the mining company and the Government of Papua New Guinea (Regan 2010, 19). By the mid-1980s a loose coalition developed between the two groups, and the initial claim for recognition as the original owners of the land shifted toward a distributive claim by way of demands for a huge compensation payment from BCL payable to landowners.

While there are connections between 'greed and grievance' and 'recognition, redistribution and representation', Fraser's model progresses understandings of conflicts over natural resources as not just motivated by profit or justice seeking. While rebellion might be triggered by experiences

of cultural marginalisation, complaints may be framed to extractive companies and national authorities as a demand for greater material rewards. However, even if these organisations were to respond to claims for the reallocation of resources, it may be insufficient to tackle the underlying issues which could necessitate an entirely different (and potentially more difficult) response. This offers important insights to policy-makers who might propose a resolution to an armed conflict (e.g. increased resource revenue transfers and political power to provinces) that is initially accepted by conflicting parties, yet find in the long term they have failed to diminish 'the more symbolic dimensions' of the conflict (e.g. the subordination of cultural symbols or the refusal to rectify historical records) (Webster 2007, 95–96). Fraser's ideas, therefore, offer a productive lens to trace the history of grievances relating to natural resources and the dynamic alterations that can occur in the types of justice being sought.

### Author Notes

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