Contesting Globalization in Ghana: Communal Resource Defense and Social Movement Learning

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Abstract: *Globalization has serious implications for rural populations in countries throughout the Global South. Rural spaces simultaneously reveal the resource appetite of global market forces while holding the greatest potential for direct resistance. Grounded in a recently completed participatory study of social movement dynamics and learning in Ghana, this article explores a rural natural resource defence movement and its ability to contest the shifting interests of capital over time in the name of communal access to resources. The ability to contest capital is shown to be grounded not only in connection to the livelihood implications but also to the local epistemic understanding of the resource as something that can not be owned outright. The article also explores the learning dimensions associated with the evolving strategies of the movement in order to demonstrate how processes of movement organization are connected to the ways movements learn.*

1. Introduction

The "globalization project," as Philip McMichael has termed it (2008: 21), is deeply intertwined with the rise of neoliberal thought, and their dual ascendency has had a dramatic effect on livelihoods throughout the Global South. While much contemporary critical writing focuses on the implications of these intertwined forces for urban populations – contributing directly to the creation of what Mike Davis (2006) has called the "Planet of Slums" – globalization has been equally devastating to rural populations pushed off their lands in order to make way for extractive industries, export-oriented cash crops and/or national development plans. In the article that follows an argument is made that it is in rural contexts that the

resource appetite of neoliberal globalization is most clearly revealed, and is therefore at its most vulnerable to resistance. The Ghanaian case that is used to make this argument builds on the conclusions of a recent participatory study of social movement activism and learning that shows the strongest movements contesting globalization are embedded in the defence of rural communal resources, and further that this defence draws strength not only from potential impacts on livelihoods, but also from advancing alternative epistemic understandings of the value of these resources.

As an illustration of these conclusions, the article lays out the case of a rural-based communal resource defence movement in Ada, Ghana. In order to provide a complex representation of this movement a historical and contemporary pattern of the movement struggle with attempts to privatize and/or capitalize the resource, as well as strategies to contest these attempts are elaborated. This description is contrasted through repeated references to an urban based movement defending public ownership of water. There are four aims of this elaboration: 1) to illustrate the link between rural livelihood and epistemic sources of mobilization as forms of strength for contesting neoliberal capitalization processes; 2) to reveal the way in which a movement's structure over time impacts the continuity of its strength; 3) to show how learning and organizing processes within a movement are potentially ambiguous – a point connected to Griff Foley's (1999) notion of learning in struggle; 4) to underscore the potential of using participatory action research to reflect on these learning processes and generate dialogue within the Ada resource defence movement towards addressing the most recent challenge to the resource by market-led interests.

Returning to connect this case to contestation of neoliberal globalization in Ghana, the article concludes by arguing the Ada example is instructive and potentially catalytic for other similar rural resource defence movements, such as those contesting concessions to mining companies.

2. Where Globalization Touches the Lives of Ghanaians

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Recent literature suggests that globalization has its most profound impact and its greatest resistance in the locations from which globalized capital aims to extract resources (Cowen and Shenton, 1998; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; McMichael, 2006; Peet and Watts, 2004). The participatory study of Ghanaian social movements and their learning that this paper relies on also lends credence to this observation and hence the need to begin by amplifying the implications of neoliberal globalization for rural dwellers.

In describing the creation of huge urban slums throughout the Global South, Davis (2006) points to the massive influx of rural dwellers to urban centres as a result of displacement due to extractive industries, shifts to export oriented cash crop production, and/or large-scale national development projects. While being cognizant of the ways in which this displacement and rural impoverishment contribute directly to these slums, it is also critical to focus on the points of origin of this displacement, as well as on the ways in which processes behind these displacements are generating resistance (McMichael, 2006). In this sense, following McMichael (2006: 475), one can envisage a different "Agrarian question" that does not see rural life as anachronistic, needing to be incorporated into the global market, but rather an "epistemic challenge" to this way of organizing the world. Kamat (2002) has described how much writing on protest movements in the south has focused on urban based movements and where it has focused on rural based movements, there has been a tendency to categorize these movements too quickly as either identity based movements, or class based movements. Kapoor (2007) has shown how Adivasi (forest dweller) movements in the Indian context contest the penetration of capital, and state disciplining on multiple registers that include both material and cultural/epistemic grounds. Peet and Watts (2004) have further elaborated how the defence of communally owned and managed natural resources is a strong base for building local movements.

At the same time, Cowen and Shenton (1998) have shown how in the African context the colonial and post-colonial state has been deeply implicated in managing rural African populations to suit the needs of capital. Similarly, although from a more Foucauldian perspective, Ferguson

and Gupta (2002) note how neoliberal globalization in the African context has constituted a new topography of power, where the streamlined neoliberal state is reconfigured as either an enabler of capital, or is by-passed by transnational capital altogether. They call this process transnational governmentality, a term which builds on the work of Foucault (1991), and that focuses on the "mentality," or the "how" of governance (Dean, 1999: 2). Importantly for the case described below, it is the way in which this neoliberal transnational governmentality enables the emergence of new forms of capital that is at stake. Likewise, and here building on Foucault's (1980) notion of subjugated knowledges as the way in which disciplining systems such as transnational governmentality are resisted, it is argued below that it is the coupling of epistemic contestation with livelihood protection that lends these rural movements their strength.

This last point echoes McMichael's construction above, but also builds on other literature that has noted this powerful combination; for instance, Taussig's (1980) work documenting the way in which Columbian and Bolivian peasants used local legends to develop explicit critiques of capital. More explicitly, Mignolo (2000) has connected the Foucauldian notion of subjugated knowledges to his idea of local histories that contest global designs, such as neoliberal globalization. Mignolo (2000) further links this framework to subaltern studies. Kapoor (2007) has noted the importance of subaltern studies in bringing material and epistemic challenges to power. For instance, Partha Chatterjee of the subaltern studies group (as cited in Lunden, 2005: 229) describes the importance of local religion as "an ontology, an epistemology" through which "subalterns act politically." In this sense, there is a strong emergent case for examining the ways in which capital is reconfiguring itself in the local, often either by using or by-passing the state, and the ways in which local movements are emerging to contest attempts to enclose, privatize or expropriate communal resources. Finally, this framework suggests it is not only based on material effect, nor cultural/epistemic dissonance, but rather a combination of both through which this contestation draws strength.

The participatory study that informs this article builds a set of conclusions very much in dialogue with this

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framework. However, it needs to be understood that these are conclusions emanating not from a review of the most recent critical literature – such as the brief snapshot above – but rather from the rich experience of the participatory collective that made up the core of this study. Before going on, a brief description of this participatory study is called for. The study builds on a strong tradition in social movement learning literature in using a participatory approach, yet, importantly adds to under-researched African movement contexts (Hall and Turray, 2006; Walter, 2007). The study took a broad look at social movement dynamics in Ghana since the country returned to democracy in 1992, as well as the way these movements learned throughout this period (Langdon, 2009a). It took place from 2007 to 2008, and brought together 5 activist-educators embedded in different Ghanaian social movements, who provided the core analysis of the research, and together with the author made up the study's Participatory Research (PR) group. The PR group members are Kofi Larweh, Al-Hassan Adam, Gifty Emefa Dzah, Tanko Iddrisu and Coleman Agyeyomah, and they draw on experience from the women's movement, the socialist movements of the 1980s, the democracy movement, various student movements, the anti-privatization of water movement and local anti-neoliberal natural resource defence movements – such as the Ada case examined below. They have also been involved in and supportive of the people with disability movement. 22 activist-educators embedded in these and other Ghanaian movements were also consulted, and their participation became the starting point for collective deliberation and analysis by the PR group – a technique used in similar ways by Fine, Torre, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, "Missy," Rivera, Roberts, Smart, and Upegui (2004).

From the PR group's perspective, a key conclusion to be drawn form the reflections on close to 20 years of activism in the Ghanaian democratic context is that it is when the livelihoods of Ghanaians are threatened directly by neoliberal globalization that movement resistance is strongest. Kofi Larweh, who is associated with the Ada communal resource defence movement examined below, notes "when people's livelihoods are at stake, then they see that look we have to do something, that is when the

movement becomes strongest, and so there is a little spark and then it goes off" (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). However, it is not the livelihood issue alone that reveals why rural spaces are among the most important sites of resistance to globalization. The PR group sees the livelihood question having implications for both rural and urban populations

For instance, in the urban context, the privatization of social services has generated much activism and resistance. A case in point, according to the PR group, is Ghana's National Coalition Against Privatization of Water (NCAP-W) (c.f. Prempeh, 2006). Al-Hassan Adam, a key figure in the NCAP-W, notes the movement is currently successfully drawing thousands of urban dwellers out to contest the management contract the previous National Patriotic Party (NPP) government put in place for water, which has seen partial-privatization lead to massive service-cost hikes with no commensurate improvement of service (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008).

Yet, despite this important example of urban contestation, the PR group came to the conclusion that while urban resistance could generate much pressure, it remained locked in debates around modernization, where social change is dominated by Eurocentric models of change (either by the state or market). As such, debates tend to remain rooted in public/private infrastructure development and ownership dichotomies. This dichotomy is most tellingly revealed in the shift in development discourse in Ghana in the mid-1980s, when a purportedly socialist revolutionary state transitioned from a state-interventionist model to embrace a market-led structural adjustment program called the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) – a quintessential cornerstone of neoliberal globalization's architecture in Ghana. Suddenly state rhetoric transitioned from state-led planning to export-oriented market led development. An important piece of this transition was the downsizing of the public sector, including massive lay-offs in state-run industries, and the selling off of these industries to private capital (Hutchful, 2002). Additionally, this transition was predicated on major relaxation of restrictions on foreign investment, a regulatory shift that saw the rise of foreign mining company activity of 500% (Hilson, 2004). With the

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transition to democracy, the access of foreign mining firms has continued to increase, culminating in the recent opening of protected forest reserves – another public asset – for mining exploration and exploitation by the current government (Tienhaara, 2006). In this sense, the choice that has been laid at the feet of Ghanaians has been between a state-led or market led model of development, yet both of these models have appropriated assets (such as land and natural resources) through different discourses of the national good – a process indicative of the topographies of power discussed by Ferguson and Gupta (2002). This point is discussed briefly below in connection with the Ada case, as well as further elaborated elsewhere (Langdon, forthcoming; Harvey & Langdon, 2010), but suffice it to say that Ghana's current democratic constitution continues a long tradition dating back to colonial times where government intervention has consistently benefited the interests of capital (foreign and domestic) over the interests of local communal approaches to land and resource use.

In contrast to this, rural ways of being in the Ghanaian context are often (but certainly not always) founded on different value systems. For instance, the communal access and control of natural resources remains an important feature of the land tenure system in much of Ghana (Songsore, 2001). As Hilson (2004: 54) has noted, this is why the socio-cultural as well as economic implications of extractive industries on land is so problematic:

> [The] perpetual expansion of mining and mineral exploration activity has displaced numerous subsistence groups outright and destroyed a wide range of cultural resources. Operations have caused widespread environmental problems, including excessive land degradation, contamination, and chemical pollution.

One of the key cultural resources that is at stake in such mining activities is the communal access to land and other assets. However, in threatening it, mining activity is also

strengthening rural community resistance. As Al-Hassan[1] notes, "anti-neoliberal movements are stronger when you have collective access to assets" (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

The strength of this defence of collective assets deeply informed the PR group's analysis of Ghanaian movement dynamics, and led the group to focus on the movements that evolve from the processes of defence, and the ways in which this defence contests neoliberal globalization. In shifting to focus on anti-neoliberal movements that are defending communal assets, the PR group is echoing the analysis of McMichael (2006) and others in locating the greatest challenge to neoliberal globalization not in urban movements like the NCAP-W, but rather in movements that challenge not only the policy directions of neoliberalism, but the entire basis of its epistemic foundation. In the Ghanaian context, these are "Unbranded … Indigenous or organic movements … which [are so localized that they] don't have any names," who resist because their way of life is challenged (Al-Hassan, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Kofi explains, "These [communal defence] movements are embedded in people's livelihoods" (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008), meaning that it is in the communities where the direct effects of neoliberalism are being felt that organic unbranded movements are mobilizing. And as Kofi notes above, it is this threat to livelihoods that "sparks" movement mobilization and generates its strength. Here, critique of the global and national economy is intertwined with the issue-based critique of the rights of rural communities to land access and decision-making rights to their land and natural resources. When this is coupled with strong spiritual and ancestral connections to these resources and land, as well as deep localized knowledge about the land and resources, the implications not only on everyday livelihood issues but also on cultural reproduction become clear. Coleman Agyeyomah connects this point to other anti-neoliberal rural-based movements, such as those generated by the effects of mining activity. He notes, "Most of the farmer based associations [in

[1] In order to highlight the contributions of members of the PR group, their first rather than last names are used, after they have been introduced.

mining areas] have turned overnight into anti-neoliberal movements. They are doing that because it has been necessitated in the current [neoliberal] environment" where their livelihoods have been destroyed (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). These movements are emerging in communities affected directly by mining activity, where displacement from land, destruction of sacred sites and the poisoning of water sources has had a dramatic effect on rural communities (Hilson, 2004; CHRAJ, 2008).

From these and other communal resource defence movements, a concluding critique has emerged from the participatory research group that combines movement resistance to the erosion of cultural ways of life as well as livelihoods into a strong and remarkably resilient source from which to contest neoliberal globalization (c.f. Boateng, 2008; Owusu-Koranteng, 2007; Langdon, 2009a). As a result of this conclusion, the PR group made a collective decision to turn reflections into action, whereby it focused on one particular communal defence movement in order to discuss its particularities and begin to develop a participatory action research process to deepen movement reflections on learning and strategies. The Ada salt flat defence movement – a name generated by the PR group as it is unnamed – is a perfect example of an organic, unbranded movement drawing on both of these lines of critique, and it invited discussions with the PR group that began in 2008 and are still ongoing.

In the sections that follow the Ada movement is discussed using three primary sources of quotes. First, there are the collective deliberations of the PR group through which a common understanding of general dynamics of social movements in Ghana since 1992 is articulated. Connected to this is an analysis of the Ada movement drawn from the direct experience of a PR group member who has been involved in the Ada movement since its inception, as well as tangential experience of other PR group members. Second, a meeting between PR group members and Ada movement members lays out the intricacies of the Ada movement. Third, this movement description is further contextualized by a radio documentary on conflicts surrounding the Songor Lagoon. Additionally, two academic sources historicizing the situation in the Songor as well as

the emergence of the resource defense movement supplement these voices.

It is hoped that the analysis and description of the movement will be deepened through the process of the emerging participatory research currently being designed. As such, the snapshots and interpretations presented here may not capture all the complexity of the movement's context; they are grounded in only a dozen voices connected with the movement. It is hoped that over time the dialogue this process engenders will provoke not only a deeper engagement with this issue, but also a reflective process on movement priorities, identity, structure and learning. In this sense, the participatory research will ultimately be movement owned and directed, and as such will serve movement purposes – something Kapoor and Jordan (2009) have noted is an important ethical dimension for PAR work with social movements.

3. Overview of the Ada Movement

Ada is a collection of coastal communities located roughly 150km from Ghana's capital, Accra, and surrounding the Songor lagoon. It is also the hub of the traditional Ada state (Manuh, 1992). Unlike many other coastal peoples whose livelihood is dependent on fishing, according the Amate (1999) the Adas rely heavily on winning salt from the Songor lagoon for their livelihood. Amate (1999: 166) notes:

> The Songor lagoon is by far the single highest income-generating natural asset… of the Ada nation … its inexhaustible natural salt yielding capacity … is unique.

The Songor salt flat is also an integral part of the Ada peoples' history. For generations they have defended their ownership of the Songor lagoon and salt flat, through pre-colonial wars, colonial attempts at expropriation, and contemporary struggles against government and private capital attempts to enclose the lagoon (Amate, 1999; Manuh, 1992). While these efforts at defence have been to ensure ongoing communal access to the salt flats by the Adas, as

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will be expanded upon below, this access in both historical and contemporary times has never been limited to only the Adas. In fact, in the past as well as in contemporary times, people wishing to win salt from the lagoon travelled from far and wide to the Songor without being turned away. This openness has led members of the movement as well as the PR group to describe the traditional salt flat management system as an alternative model to national capitalist and statist expropriations of natural resources (Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008; PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

In attempting to describe the Ada movement it is important to begin by focusing on the historical past of the Ada people as well as the Songor lagoon. Amate (1999: vi) has provided one of the few detailed accounts of the "Making of Ada," including a deeply informative description of the evolving relationship of the Adas with the Songor. There two salient points from Amate's work that are important in contextualizing the emergence of the Ada movement. First, he provides an important historicized account of the precolonial authority structure associated with the Songor, as well as in the Ada nation more broadly. Amate (1999: 41) notes:

> The early kings of Ada were… not free agents. Their areas of competence and activity were circumscribed by the parameters laid down for them by the high priests.

This was especially true of the Songor, where the Libi *wornor*, the Songor high priest, and the Tekperbiawe clan from which he came were "accepted from time immemorial by all the Ada clans" as the main authority of the lagoon (Amate, 1999: 166). This authority structure is important as it emerges as an important cultural point of mobilization in the movement struggles described below.

Second, Amate's (1999) work provides another important historical frame for situating discussions of the Songor and the Ada nation as he describes the evolution of chieftaincy in the British colonial period (1868-1957), especially in connection with the Songor as the main livelihood generator. He notes that despite its precolonial

acceptance, the Libi *wornor's* authority "began to be seriously challenged" in the colonial period (1999: 166). Much like Geschiere's (1993: 151) account of British manipulation of "customary law" in Cameroon, where the British used their position as mediators between different leadership factions to destabilize local authority, Amate (1999) describes repeated mediation by the British with regards to the Songor, where alternatively the Libi *worno's* authority was reinforced, and then eroded through subsequent decisions. Again, this historical context is crucial not only in understanding how competing claims of authority over the Songor continue today – a genealogy Amate describes vividly; but more importantly for the account being share here, this account illustrates how the colonial method of divide and rule continues to inform contemporary attempts to enclose and privatize the lagoon in the interests of capital. However, in order to fully elaborate the historical factors that set the stage for the emergence of the Ada salt flat defence movement, one more detail connected to statist national development is needed.

Takyiwaa Manuh (1992) has shown how the decision to build a major dam on the Volta River by Ghana's first (statist) government in the 1960s led to a dramatic change in the ecology of the Songor salt flats and lagoon in the 1970s, with a massive reduction in salt provision. According to her, it is partially as a result of this dramatic change that a local traditional chieftaincy authority, the Ada Traditional Council, decided to grant leases of land to two companies in the 1970s with the hopes that these companies would bring investment and jobs to the area – not try to prevent access to the resource. Kofi Larweh notes that despite this intent, something else came out of this agreement:

> There had been attempts, especially in the 70s to take over the lagoon. At some point the local chiefs said they were approached, when government came in to allow privatization. The discussion was for a small parcel, but on paper it was something huge. Ok, that was one of the reasons for the [formation of the movement] because what was discussed was not what was put on paper, and the people were being prevented from winning salt even from the larger

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> portions that was for the local people. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

Amate (1999) further adds that this entire leasing process was fraught with competing claims, and lawsuits between different elements in the chieftaincy and priestly authority structures. However, in the years following this concession, the prevention of access to the lagoon by one company in particular, Vacuum Salt Limited (VSL) largely precipitated the formation of the Songor movement. Also instrumental to the formation of this movement were the shifts in power at the national level, when a socialist military uprising in 1981, led by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), took control of the country from a civilian administration. Its leader Jerry Rawlings declared the PNDC espoused socialist goals meant to "transform the social and economic order of [the] country" (cited in Shillington, 1992: 80).

This shift, according to Manuh (1992: 115), opened the door for one of the local People's Defence Committees (PDCs) "formed in communities and workplaces following the events of 31 December 1981" to take "over the operations of Vacuum Salt Limited." However, when the PNDC and Rawlings later took an abrupt right turn in 1984, introducing Ghana's first structural adjustment policy (the ERP discussed above), the tables were turned. The owners of Vacuum Salt Limited returned and again prevented access to the lagoon, but this time with the backing of local police and military forces. It was at this point that many of those involved in the PDCs left the PNDC and began to work with local salt-winners to organize a loose co-operative. While many other cooperatives existed at the local level in Ghana during this period – a tacit connection to a leftist rhetoric of the PNDC – the salt co-operatives were different and "arose from the struggle of Ada people … to regain sovereignty over the lagoon" (Manuh, 1992: 115). At its height, the main co-operative boasted 3200 members, and also fostered many smaller collectives (Manuh, 1992). In contemporary times, despite the much looser organizational framework, this history of struggle along with the co-operatives that emerged help ensure the ongoing presence of the movement – though its existence is largely unnamed, indicating its unbranded nature (Al-Hassan & Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd,

2008). In this sense, the co-operative structure provided the mechanism through which a movement could be formed, even in an era where many of those opposing the new neoliberal focus on deregulation were targeted, tortured and imprisoned (Haynes, 1991). It was through this cooperative that the growing arrogance of VSL and the Apenteng family that owned it were resisted.

In recounting this resistance, it is best to draw on the voices of members of this era of resistance. Albert Adinortey Apetorgbor, a member of the older generation of the movement, describes how:

> The late Apenteng, especially his son Stephen, would not allow anybody to win salt, let alone keep it in stock around the Lagoon for a better price. One day … he brought some soldiers to the Kasseh market some 20 kilometres away from the Lagoon…The soldiers started beating all the women selling salt at the market and all the vehicles loaded with salt were attacked. (Radio Ada, 2002: 3)

The violence used by VSL helped spark the formation of the cooperative described above. It also provoked an intervention by the local priests, the Libi *worno*, who guarded the spiritual essence of the lagoon (Manuh, 1992). Apetorgbor further describes how the local knowledge of preserving the salt formation to ensure equitable distribution as well as maintenance of the ecosystem became a rallying point during the conflict with VSL (Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008). The practice of fetish priests placing sticks in the lagoon in order to indicate a "ban on entering the lagoon" was used to symbolically challenge the use of the lagoon by VSL (Manuh, 1992: 113). When the company removed the sticks, it sparked large scale anger and acts of resistance against the company and its local police and military allies (Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008). These acts included burning "a heap of salt kept in storage … most of which belonged to Apenteng [of VSL]" (Radio Ada, 2002: 5). As a result, Apetorgbor describes how:

> Anybody found in the Lagoon was arrested …They were sent to the Vacuum Salt Company's office. The

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> suspects were given salt to chew and salt concentrates to drink. They were given other unspeakable punishments, as Apenteng directed. Thereafter, they were taken to … Accra, where they were put in cells for three weeks. (Radio Ada, 2002: 5)

On May 17th, 1985, the violence of VSL against the people of Ada culminated in the death of Maggie Lanuer – a pregnant woman killed by a stray bullet fired by a raiding police officer. After her death, the government formed a commission to investigate the complaints being made by Ada residents, and ultimately banned the VSL owners from operating in and around the lagoon (Manuh, 1992). Yet, this victory is hollow, as what was and continues to be at stake in this conflict is not a simple movement against a particular company, but rather a contestation of an overarching logic that it is government or private capital that knows best how the salt flats in the Songor should be used. In order to explain this, it is necessary to further detail how this resource has been managed in the past – something Amate alluded to above.

"In the past," notes Takyiwaa Manuh, "the process of collecting salt from the lagoon demonstrated community management of a natural resource" (1992: 104). Yet, as Apetorgbor notes, this was not the only implication of this way of knowing and being:

> People from all walks of life come to the Songor Lagoon for salt. Some come from as far as Tamale, Ewe land, Kumasi and other places (Radio Ada, 2002: 3).[1]

Kofi notes how the traditional resource management system helped guarantee this sense of collective ownership and access:

> The [Songor] movement is deeply rooted in the culture of the people, why? Because of the way ownership is conceived. Ada is made up of different clans, … and

[1] This description implies the wide-scale national use of this resource since Tamale is in Ghana's North, while Ewe-land refers to Eastern Ghana, and Kumasi is in the middle of the country.

> one clan is seen as the owner of the water body. And there are four others who are owners of the surrounding lands. You look at the wisdom in this … So when you say the owner of the water body is there, and the surrounding lands have also got owners it is a convenient agreement for joint ownership (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

No one clan can claim outright ownership of the resource. This ownership process not only benefits all those living in the Ada area, but also other Ghanaians. According to Kofi, this makes the salt flats of Songor a "national asset" (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

However, this national character was interpreted differently by the PNDC government in the aftermath of Maggie Lanuer's death. Instead of returning the management of this resource to the communities and people who had been successfully maintaining, defending, and sharing it for generations, the government enacted PNDC law 287 that was later to inform the 1992 Constitution (Langdon, forthcoming). The essence of law 287 is that salt should be considered like any other natural resource, and it was therefore claimed by the central PNDC government in the name of all Ghanaians. Yet, as Manuh (1992) notes, this claim is actually for hire, as the central government changes sides in local conflicts based on the transnational powers of the day. This unpredictability worries those fighting for local control of the Songor lagoon. For instance, Maggie Lanuer's husband, Thomas Ocloo, states that "it was the death of my wife that led the former President [Rawlings] to make a law to take over the Songor and hold it in trust for the people of Ada," thereby taking the resource away from VSL and the Apentengs (Radio Ada, 2002: 6). Yet, Ocloo believes having the resource held in trust by the central government leaves it open to abuse by whoever is in the Presidency and the interests he or she represents. He notes, "the present [New Patriotic Party] government and for that matter the current President Kufuor is doing all he can to take over the resource completely to deprive the Adas of ownership" (6). This has led the people of Ada to realize they cannot trust the national government. As a result, according to Ocloo, "The Adas want the government to hand over the resource to them" (6). Al-

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Hassan points out that this resistance by the people of Ada means they are not just fighting the government of the day, but "fighting against the constitution" (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). It is precisely this larger implication that makes working with the Songor defence movement so important, as the movement's struggle has implications not only on the ongoing history of defending this resource, but also on the national framework through which transnational neoliberal governmentality is enacted. From the PR group's perspective, of additional importance is the organizational structure of the movement, including how it is led and how it learns.

4. Contrasting Social Movement Approaches to Leadership

A key aspect of the Ada story and of the story of other unbranded organic movements is the relationship between leadership and the wider movement. As the description above suggests, with the mushrooming of the salt cooperatives, as well as continued community interest, leadership has remained decentralized in the Ada case, and is therefore quite amorphous – even though there is certainly an older generation of activists who play leadership roles based on their experience in the conflict with VSL. In this sense, rural-based unbranded organic movements are a striking contrast to urban movements. Based on the analysis of the PR group, this difference can be described as a leadership and organizational style that is dialogue-based as opposed to strategic and didactic (Langdon, 2009a). A further exploration of recent challenges within NCAP-W will help reveal these differences. Al-Hassan describes how NCAP-W is becoming institutionalized:

> We are beginning to face [institutionalization] in NCAP[-W] because NCAP[-W] is becoming more elitist. So this is what … we have been battling with, how to get back into that route of horizontal organization. (PR group meeting, Feb 23rd, 2008)

Tanko underscores another dimension of this battle by describing how some elements in the NCAP-W leadership are

willing to sacrifice the issue of privatization and with it the needs of the many, so long as the asset remains Ghanaian owned:

> There was a point in time, where we were opposed to privatization of water, but you hear … muted voices within the NCAP[-W] fraternity who said, "look, if it is nationals who have money and can …" so then the principle is not against privatization, but that we don't want some foreigner coming in. (PR group meeting, Feb 24th, 2008)

From this what has been a modernization urban debate over public or private infrastructure ownership becomes reconfigured as a conflict between capitalist elites – national or foreign. The potential for this type of cooptation is a reality of any social movement mobilization; yet, what is at issue here is the composition of a given movement and the ways in which this composition prevents potential cooptation by leadership – in essence keeps the leaders of the movement constantly re-prioritizing based on the felt needs of the broader membership as opposed to their own strategic decision concerning "what is best for the people" (Coleman, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

It was based on these differentiations that the PR group elaborated the two descriptions, or typologies, of movements in the Ghanaian context captured above (Langdon, 2009a). The first of these, exemplified to some degree by the recent institutionalizational pressure in NCAP, involves a movement leadership becoming strategic and didactic in its thinking. The consequences of this can be positive, in being able to react to external issues in a timely and pointed manner, but are ultimately negative as this approach can lead the movement to become deracinated from people's felt needs. In contrast to this, the PR group described a dialogue-based typology, described further below, where leadership is diffuse and is therefore more directly in touch with the wider felt needs of members. The ongoing dialogue between this amorphous level of leadership and the broader movement regenerates momentum on an ongoing basis. The Ada movement is a strong example of this.

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Organization and Leadership in the Ada Movement

Returning to the Ada case, this typology helps highlight the ways in which power within this movement is diffuse, with important implications for movement leadership and dialogue. There are no particular leadership names that surface when the movement is described – even as the movement remains itself unnamed/unbranded. Instead, there is a description of actions that emerge from struggle. For instance, the salt burning Apetorgbor describes above revealed the pluralistic character of the movement. He notes, "Some of those arrested came from Matsekope, Luhour, Kopehem, Koluedor and some of the coastal villages" (Radio Ada, 2002: 3). This is an important indication of how this movement connected with community felt-needs across the Ada spectrum. It is also indicative of the diffuse, organic and pluralistic nature of the movement that Manuh's description outlined, where the emergence of other salt winning co-operatives complemented and challenged the first co-operative. This multiplying of co-ops both mushroomed the activism around the salt lagoon, making it more difficult for one particular group to be targeted by police, and also helped ensure the power of the first co-op was restrained.

The strength of this approach is critical in the most recent challenge facing the movement. Kofi describes this new challenge by connecting it to a critique of the link between chieftaincy and the interests of capital (a description that echoes Amate's (1999) laid out above):

> Adas originally were being ruled by the Libi *worno*, fetish priests … [I]t was the wars that brought in chieftaincy. The modern practice has eroded the authority of the fetish priest and has imposed some new roles and powers on the emerging chiefs … There was a big meeting [that] has to do with this cannibalization of the lagoon by some of the new chiefs who see that "I am a chief and there is no collective resource that I am controlling so let me, once I know that I have part of the resource of the lagoon as one let me bring in some crude technology [to make salt]". So what the companies [such as VSL] are doing some of the chiefs have started … [S]o it is bringing conflict, so

> local people who can walk into the lagoon to win salt are finding it difficult because the surrounding lands that produce salt are now all being controlled. (PR group meeting, Feb 23rd, 2008)

A segment of youth associated with the movement destroyed some of these enclosures and were subsequently arrested, and the older generation of activists were quite slow in coming to their aid (Harvey and Langdon, 2010; Langdon, 2009a). This has led to tensions within the movement between an older generation that is wary of openly attacking chieftaincy institutions, and a younger generation that sees challenging them as critical part in contesting attempts to disinherit the collective ownership of the resource. Echoing Amate's (1999) second point made above, Al-Hassan points out how much of this tension stems from the way in which chieftaincy has been co-opted by colonial and capital interests in Ghana:

> The introduction of private capital control, which was being encouraged by the chiefs … people have that kind of recognition of leadership rule by chiefs and clans, once, you just gave us the history of the place, which from the beginning there was nothing like chieftaincy, and chieftaincy is a recent creation. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

Al-Hassan is helping to illustrate how the tendency to respect the institution of chieftaincy, even where it clearly "is a recent creation," enables unscrupulous connections with private capital that undermine collective asset control. While the older generation of revolutionaries and salt-winners contested decisions made by chiefs they still nonetheless paid homage to the institution; for instance, Manuh (1992) notes that the main salt-cooperative sometimes even paid upkeep costs of the chiefs. With certain chiefs now behaving like VSL, the younger generation has reinterpreted chiefs as a threat to access and therefore livelihoods *and* the epistemic origins of the traditional collective resource management system. Revealing an emergent tension between the actions of the youth and the more respectful dialogue of the older generation, community members have largely supported the

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analysis of the youth. Indicating the dialogue-based nature of this movement, these community members, as well as users of the resource from outside the Ada area have all been using the medium of the community radio to air their concerns. Kofi describes this deep level of community concern in his description of recent calls to the radio:

> In fact, on Monday of this week, part of the morning program, part of the morning breakfast show was what is happening in the Songor because we have had calls, and people have been calling in on some other programs that we have organized in the community people have hinted, and so they say … if action is not taken, if people do not, if the people who are cheating us are not prevented there will be war in the Songor. (Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

It is through informal dialogue processes such as these that the actions of the youth are being supported, and pressure is being brought to bear on the cooperatives to reconsider whether to even negotiate with chiefs. The tension at the heart of the relationship between the movement and chiefs is reflected in statements like this one by Apetorgbor:

> We bow today, reminding the elders of the Traditional Council that they are occupying their stools as our heads. Without us, they are nothing … In yesteryears, our forefathers went to war, but today there are no such wars… The new war is not the usual use of guns and cutlasses; it is a war of malicious schemes and the lure of money to deprive the Adas of their birthright. The elders must be firm and resolute. They must not give themselves up to be lured. I wish to remind them again of their oath. (Radio Ada, 2002: 7)

5. Learning Re-embedded in Struggle

According to the PR group, this dialogue-based typology is grounded in fundamentally different approaches to learning within movements. Where strategic and didactic movements determine specific ways of conceiving of their struggle – stifling dissent through authoritative structures –

dialogue-based movements are grounded in a framework of ongoing discussion that resists ownership of learning, and democratizes it. This differentiation has important implications for the ways in which movement members *learn to struggle*. Learning to struggle is one of three analytical lenses of informal learning within social movements that emerged in the PR group discussions – all three of whom build on the work of Griff Foley (1999: 9) and his notion of "learning in struggle." For Foley, studying the often-overlooked informal learning that emerges in social movement struggles and actions is critical to understanding the challenges movements face and the implications of the strategies they use to grapple with these strategies. Foley (1999: 143) argues that analyzing learning in struggle can reveal the "complex, ambiguous and contradictory character of social movements," where a successful campaign may stop a particular project, but may also entrench new forms of neoliberal power in a movement. Much like the literature mentioned at the outset of this article, Foley's (1999: 4) approach focuses on the effects of capital, but also recognizes the importance of what he calls "people's everyday experiences," and like the subjugated knowledges described above, he sees these as being the source of "recognitions which enable people to critique and challenge the existing order." Importantly, it is through processes of informal learning in the face of struggles that he sees these recognitions emerging, even if their emergence can have ambiguous consequences.

In the analysis of the PR group "learning in struggle" was kept as the way to describe the long term process of movement learning in social action; meanwhile, "learning through struggle" was advanced as a way to describe the particular and often ambiguous learning that occurs during the course of a particular conflict or event (i.e. a strike, a campaign, or a particular demonstration), and "learning to struggle" emerged as a way to describe the normative thoughts on, as well as processes through which, movement members actually learn to engage in struggle (Langdon, 2009a and b).

In this sense, "learning to struggle" captures both thinking on *how* movements *should* learn to struggle, as well as reflections on *how* movements *do* learn to struggle. In

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combining both of these inflections, the PR group identified unbranded and organic movements – with their dialogue-based organizational and leadership structure – as a key source of inspiration for the ways in which movements not only *do* learn, but *should* learn to struggle. As with sections above, the Ada movement provides an example of this approach to social movement learning, and its implications for learning to struggle.

Snapshots of Learning to Struggle in the Ada Movement

Broadly speaking, three snapshots of learning to struggle in the Ada movement have emerged in discussions between movement members and members of the PR group. These snapshots have yet to be interrogated and deepened through a PAR process which is in the process of being designed. Nonetheless, these snapshots provide a complex enough picture to be useful.

First, the revolutionary youth and workers of the early days of the PNDC who had briefly taken over the running of the VSL compound joined with local salt-winners in contesting and then resisting the return of the VSL owners in 1984. In challenging both company and hired police and military, this new alliance formed strong bonds, yet these bonds remained pluralistic as the first salt cooperative mushroomed into the formation of other cooperatives. A key component to the mobilization around this learning in action and struggle was the way defending the traditional management of the resource drew support from broader community members. While the most telling demonstration of this was the removal of the sticks placed in the lagoon by the priests – as described above – it is also clear that part of the mobilizing force was also a defense of the resource management system and the way in which the original agreement with VSL was misinterpreted. The key to draw away here is that the traditional resource management system provided an important rhetorical platform from which this pluralistic group argued for local control of the resource (Manuh, 1992).

Second, over time, the group of salt-winners and former members of the local revolutionary core have used the rhetorical link with the traditional resource management

system to conduct a dual set of engagements. On the one side, this older core has been involved in trying to convince government to cede the resource to local control (Manuh, 1992); on the other, this core has worked on chiefs to respect their roles, and not over step them. This second aspect is reflected in the Apetorgbor statement quoted above. However, this second approach has been configured more as an appeal to chiefs, even as it reminds them of the history. In contrast to this approach that still respects the authority of chiefs, the youthful element within the movement has taken a much more radical stance in identifying chieftaincy as a threat to communal access (Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This disconnection between the older generation of movement leaders and youth has emerged as a major challenge to the movement's continued relevance. It has also emerged as an important moment where the movement membership is regenerating, and thereby re-learning to struggle. This process of challenge and potential regeneration remains open-ended.

However, the third emerging snapshot of learning to struggle suggests the direction that this regeneration between generations might take. The reaction of community members to this most recent threat to communal ownership of the salt flats, as described by Kofi above, indicates the analysis and actions of the youth are more deeply grounded in the current felt needs of the wider community. This connection with felt needs also has potential rhetorical recourse to a reconfigured concept of ownership of the lagoon which draws on precolonial societal structures where it is not chiefs but rather the Libi *worno* who has the authority over lagoon access (Apetorgbor, Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008; Amate, 1999). This is a key re-articulation of the past epistemic challenge the movement and the Libi *worno* launched against VSL, where chiefs along with the Libi *worno* were accorded a place; now this challenge is being re-configured to contest expropriation attempts by local chiefs on the basis of challenging the foundations of their authority. With this argument beginning to emerge in public discourse, the older generation of movement leaders is already beginning to reconfigure their relationship with the broader chieftaincy system (Kofi, personal communication, July 2009). The re-articulation will

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certainly be necessary to remain in dialogue with the articulated felt needs of the broader community to maintain communal access to the salt flat.

Unlike a more institutionalized movement, the moment a more diffuse and dialogue-based movement stops being embedded in the broader felt needs, the momentum and collective strength of the movement will disappear – a point Al-Hassan underscored above. Therefore, the Ada movement is well positioned to learn to struggle in new ways because it is rooted in the ongoing collective defense of community felt needs; yet this process is not straight forward, nor is it without its own ambiguous power dynamics. What this example shows is the potential that exists for collective resource defense movements to challenge not only the material reality but also the epistemic logic of neoliberal globalized resource alienation. It also reveals the very real power stratification of the local, where the realities of globalization are felt, and where these realities can lead to cooptation.

6. Reflections on Globalization

Connecting back to the issue of globalization, the complex representation of the Ada movement is indicative of the rich strength of movements defending not only economic ways of life, but also alternative ways of being in the world. The key mobilizing factors of this movement are directly connected to these two strengths. The initial mobilization period was sparked by the dual challenge of VSL to communal access to the natural resource, and the longstanding and balanced natural resource management system deeply informed by the regenerative spirit of the lagoon as interpreted by the Libi *worno* – the custodians of this spirit. This management system belies logics of outright land ownership and rather places responsibility for resource use and maintenance in collective hands – entrenching a custodial rather than exploitative relationship with the resource. It is not surprising that this first challenge arose at the dawn of the neoliberal age, when structural adjustment programs, such as Ghana's ERP, were clearly privileging and encouraging the penetration of extractive and exploitive relationships with land and resources over alternative logics.

Following on from this, it should not also be surprising that in the contemporary era, as globalization has reconfigured capital's topographic relationship with African states through transnational governmentality, it is local elites who are leading the latest efforts of resource enclosure – in much the same way that it should not be surprising to see certain members of NCAP-W beginning to suggest local capital control is as good as keeping water a public asset. Yet, despite the fact that in the Ada case these elites are members of chieftaincy structures, the strength of the dialogue-based movement process is ensuring local analysis of this new strategy of capital is the same: it is an attempt to reconfigure the communal nature of this resource, and regardless of the position of these chiefs, their behavior contravenes the pre-colonial balanced approach to resource ownership. The mobilizing strength of this challenge is telling, as one recent Radio Ada caller said, "If this situation is not addressed, there will be war in the Songor." In this sense, both in the recent past and in contemporary times, the connection between the defense of communal assets and a long-established alternative way of being and valuing the world provides the strength for challenges to globalization in the Ada case, in particular, and the Ghanaian context, more generally; after all, the Ada case is only one example of rural unbranded movements the PR group identified in Ghana, such as in communities impacted by mining. These challenges globalization are most pointed, most embedded in peoples felt needs and alternative epistemologies/ontologies, in rural locations in Ghana. In this sense, the Ghanaian centered research presented here, as exemplified by the Ada case, buttresses other contemporary research and theorizing that sees agrarian locations resisting the logic of neoliberal capitalist resource extraction as the greatest challenge to globalization – precisely because these spaces are where the needs of neoliberal capitalism are greatest, and where their discursive and material power are weakest as people still have recourse to other ways of knowing, being and building livelihoods.

Studies of globalization must focus not only on resistance emerging in urban contexts, where it is often most visible, but also in rural locations where neoliberal capitalism draws its resources – and where the logic of this

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resource extraction is being questioned by unbranded and unnamed movements and communities with alternative and regenerative relations with the land of their own.

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