

# Economic displacement and livelihood threats: The impact of industrial resource extraction on local economies

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study seeks to deconstruct the complex factors underlying the conflict between local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana by applying a Political Ecology framework.

**Research methodology:** A qualitative analysis and the Political Ecology theoretical lens are used to examine underlying factors of the case. It draws on empirical evidence from similar conflicts in the region; and contextualizes the Ada East situation within broader patterns of industrial resource extraction and their impact on local economies.

**Results:** Two core theses of Political Ecology emerge as most relevant to the case: (1) Power and Access to Resources, which examines how control over natural resources by corporations can marginalize local people and (2) Environmental Justice, which highlights the disproportionate socio-environmental costs borne by local communities.

**Conclusions:** This study concludes that the conflict between local miners, the Ada East District Assembly and Electrochem Ghana is deeply rooted in competing interests over resource control, governance dynamics, and socio-environmental inequalities, as illuminated through the lens of Political Ecology.

**Limitations:** The analysis is limited to secondary data from comparable cases, which vary in contextual specifics.

**Contribution:** The study contributes to the literature on Political Ecology by demonstrating how this framework can be applied to assess real-world conflicts over resource access and industrial expansion. It also emphasizes the importance of equitable governance and sustainable resource management in mitigating such conflicts.

**Keywords:** *Economic Displacement, Livelihood, Local Economies, Political Economy, Resource Extraction*

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of industrial resource extraction in many regions across Africa has generated a contentious blend of economic growth and disruption, profoundly affecting the livelihoods of local communities (Torvikey, Gyapong, & Adomaa, 2022). In Ghana, the conflict between local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana company illustrates the complex issues of economic displacement and livelihood threats that often accompany such projects (Atta-Quayson, 2024). As Electrochem Ghana has expanded its operations in the region, local miners have faced restricted access to traditionally shared resources, significantly impacting their ability to sustain

incomes and maintain economic independence. The changes induced by large-scale extraction projects frequently disrupt local economic systems and create a stark shift in employment patterns, income generation and socio-economic stability.

From a Political Ecology perspective, the situation in Ada East exemplifies how power inequalities and control over resources marginalize local stakeholders, especially those in artisanal and small-scale industries who rely heavily on the land for their livelihoods. The consolidation of land for industrial purposes often displaces these workers by stripping away essential economic opportunities and threatening the resilience of traditional economies that have sustained communities for generations. As the government partners with private entities to develop these resource-rich regions, the resulting displacement fuels tensions among the affected communities, corporate entities, and local authorities. This creates a complex interplay of interests, where the community's socio-economic needs conflict with corporate goals for profit maximization, as well as regional governments' ambitions for economic growth (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). Much of the existing literature tends to emphasize macroeconomic indicators, overlooking the lived realities of communities that directly bear the costs of resource extraction. In particular, the disruption of traditional livelihoods, forced economic displacement, and the erosion of local enterprise have not been sufficiently examined through a localized and intersectional lens. This review therefore examines the existing literature across four key themes: the economic and social impacts of displacement, the role of industrial resource extraction in disrupting traditional livelihoods, the efficacy of compensation and resettlement programs, and the broader implications for sustainable development.

## **2. Literature review**

Economic displacement refers to the forced or involuntary loss of economic activities, income sources, or employment opportunities due to external factors such as industrialization, large-scale development projects, or environmental changes (Ofori, Takyi, Amponsah, & Gagakuma, 2023). It often affects local communities that are dependent on traditional livelihoods. Livelihood threats are the risks and challenges that endanger people's ability to sustain their means of living as a result of economic shifts, environmental degradation, or policy changes (Schilling, Schilling-Vacaflor, Flemmer, & Froese, 2021). These threats lead to poverty, food insecurity, and economic displacement. Industrial resource extraction includes the large-scale removal of natural resources such as minerals, oil, gas, and timber for commercial purposes. This process often involves mining, drilling, and deforestation, which have environmental, economic, and social consequences. Local economies operate within a specific geographic region, typically composed of small businesses, agricultural activities, and community-based trade (Bans-Akutey, 2025; Moussa & Bans-Akutey, 2022; Naab & Bans-Akutey, 2021; Nairobi, Ambya, Afif, & Pratikno, 2022). They are highly sensitive to external disruptions such as industrial development and resource extraction.

Resource extraction, in the form of oil drilling, and other industrial activities, is often framed as a development tool that can bring significant economic growth to regions rich in natural resources (Shah, Zaman, Khan, & Rashid, 2022). However, it is also widely recognized that these activities pose substantial risks to local economies, particularly those that rely heavily on traditional or subsistence livelihoods (Torvikey et al., 2022). Economic displacement has been identified as a primary consequence of industrial resource extraction, particularly in rural or peri-urban areas where populations rely on agriculture, fishing, and small-scale businesses. According to Bebbington (2013), displacement disrupts traditional economic activities, causing loss of land, restricted access to resources, and in some cases, the destruction of infrastructure critical to local businesses. This displacement leads to immediate income losses and long-term economic instability, as traditional livelihoods are replaced by precarious, often lower-paying employment in extractive industries.

Livelihood disruption illustrates how resource extraction projects alter the socioeconomic landscape of affected areas (Acheampong, 2018). A study by Gamu, Le Billon, and Spiegel (2015) further underscores how these changes exacerbate poverty and increase dependency on the extraction industry, thus creating a cycle of dependency and underemployment that limits the development of diversified local economies. Environmental degradation associated with resource extraction has significant

economic repercussions for local economies. According to Tiamgne, Kalaba, and Nyirenda (2022), contamination of soil, water, and air from mining and oil extraction lead to the decline of local agriculture and fishing sectors. This environmental harm not only undermines the health and safety of local communities but also results in a drastic reduction in agricultural productivity, which is often the backbone of local economies. Consequently, these regions become less self-sufficient and more dependent on external sources of food and income, placing additional strain on local resources and economies.

While many countries have policies that mandate compensation and resettlement for displaced populations, the literature reveals mixed outcomes for those affected. For example, a study by Cernea (2003) on involuntary resettlement highlights that compensation schemes often fail to account for the full economic and cultural loss experienced by displaced populations (Azimi, 2021). Monetary compensation rarely replaces the loss of land-based livelihoods, and relocated communities often face inadequate infrastructure and lack of access to services in their new locations. Resettlement policies are frequently implemented without sufficient community engagement, resulting in subpar living conditions and limited opportunities for sustainable livelihood restoration. These policies fail to address the broader impacts on social structures, such as loss of community networks and cultural heritage, which are critical to economic recovery.

Several studies, including that by Torvikey et al. (2022), emphasize the gendered dimension of economic displacement due to resource extraction. Women, in particular, face greater challenges in adapting to displacement as their roles are often tied to subsistence agriculture and small-scale trading, activities that may not transfer easily to alternative employment in extraction industries. In many cases, male-dominated jobs in mining and oil extraction exclude women, who are left with fewer livelihood options and increased dependence on male relatives, thereby reinforcing gender disparities. Furthermore, displacement can increase women's vulnerability to exploitation, as traditional forms of income and social support systems are disrupted.

Long-term impacts of industrial resource extraction on local economies raise questions about sustainability and equitable growth (Udodiugwu, Obikaor, Eneremadu, Onwuegbuchulem, & Anyaegbunam, 2025). Some scholars, including Sachs and Warner (2001), argue that resource-rich regions often experience a paradoxical decline in economic growth, known as the "resource curse." This phenomenon occurs as economic dependence on resource extraction prevents diversification, leading to greater susceptibility to market volatility and decreasing investment in other sectors. Moreover, Auty (2007) discusses how extractive industries contribute to weak institutional frameworks and governance challenges, which impede the development of robust economic policies that could promote sustainable development and mitigate the negative impacts on local communities.

## ***2.1 Political Ecology Lens***

Political ecology examines how political, economic, and social structures shape environmental issues. It seeks to understand how power dynamics, institutions, and ideologies influence the distribution of resources, access to environmental goods and services, and the shaping of environmental policies (Roberts, 2020). Political ecology emphasizes the role of power relations in shaping environmental outcomes. It looks at how different groups, whether based on class, ethnicity, or other social factors, exert influence over natural resources, land use, and environmental policies. Understanding who holds power and how it is exercised is crucial for comprehending environmental change. This theoretical perspective integrates political and economic analyses to explore how economic structures and processes contribute to environmental challenges. It questions how capitalist systems, globalization, and neoliberal policies influence resource extraction, land use, and environmental degradation. Political ecology investigates the unequal distribution of environmental costs and benefits.

Political ecology challenges the idea of nature as a neutral and objective entity. It examines how society constructs and perceives nature, showing that environmental concepts, values, and classifications are socially and culturally constructed (Leff, 2021). This lens helps reveal how certain groups frame environmental issues to advance their interests or justify particular policies. It scrutinizes environmental

governance structures and institutions, and investigates how rules and regulations are formulated and implemented. It analyses how these systems favour certain groups or interests and explores the impact of global institutions on local environments. This perspective is particularly valuable for understanding the effectiveness of conservation initiatives and sustainable development practices.

One of the central concerns of political ecology is environmental justice (Figueroa, 2022). It examines how environmental benefits and burdens are distributed among different social groups. This lens highlights issues of environmental racism, unequal exposure to pollution and the marginalization of certain communities in decision-making processes related to natural resource management. Political ecology also looks at resistance movements and environmental activism. It explores how communities affected by environmental issues organize and mobilize against perceived injustices. This lens sheds light on the role of grassroots movements in challenging dominant narratives and advocating for more equitable and sustainable environmental practices. Political ecology recognizes the importance of scale in understanding environmental issues. It examines how processes at local, national, and global levels intersect and influence ecological dynamics. This approach is crucial for unravelling complex environmental problems that span different spatial and temporal scales. It can therefore be concluded that environmental issues cannot be discussed and addressed in isolation but in the contexts of degradation and marginalization; environmental conflict; conservation and control; and environmental identity and social movement.

Political Ecology is a multidisciplinary field of study that explores the intricate interconnections between society, politics, and the environment. Central to political ecology are four fundamental theses that provide a framework for understanding the complex dynamics shaping environmental issues. These theses are degradation and marginalization, environmental conflict, conservation and control, and environmental identity and social movement (Roberts, 2020). The degradation and marginalization thesis underscores the idea that environmental degradation often leads to the marginalization of certain social groups (Björkman, 2024). The exploitation or degradation of natural resources disproportionately affect marginalized communities, contributing to increased poverty, vulnerability and social inequities. For instance, in the context of deforestation, logging activities may lead to soil erosion and loss of biodiversity, negatively impacting indigenous communities reliant on the forest for their livelihoods. This degradation can marginalize these communities by disrupting their traditional ways of life.

Environmental Conflict thesis posits that environmental issues are not solely ecological but are also deeply entwined with social and political conflicts over resource access, control, and use (Clark, Smolski, Allen, Hedlund, & Sanchez, 2022). Conflicts arise when different actors with conflicting interests vie for dominance over valuable environmental assets. For example, water scarcity in a region might trigger conflicts between agricultural communities and industrial sectors over access to water resources. The competition for limited resources becomes a source of tension and conflict, illustrating the social dimensions of environmental issues. Conservation and control thesis focuses on how environmental governance often serves the interests of powerful entities, leading to the control of resources for economic or political gain (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022). Policies aimed at conservation may restrict access for local communities, reinforcing social and economic inequalities. The establishment of national parks for biodiversity conservation might restrict the access of indigenous communities to their traditional lands, limiting their ability to engage in subsistence practices. This reflects the control exerted by conservation policies.

Environmental identity and social movement thesis suggests that individuals and communities form identities around their relationship with the environment, where these identities can fuel social movements advocating for environmental justice (Kálmán, 2024). Shared environmental identities drive collective action to protect ecosystems and livelihoods. For example, indigenous communities organizing to resist mining projects that threaten their ancestral lands exemplify the formation of environmental identity. The shared identity becomes a powerful force in mobilizing social movements to protect the environment.

In summary, political ecology's four fundamental theses provide a comprehensive framework for analysing the social, political, and ecological dimensions of environmental issues. These theses highlight the difficulties inherent in the relationships between society and the environment, stressing the need for a holistic understanding that integrates ecological, political, and cultural perspectives. Among the central theses of Political Ecology, two that best encapsulate various aspects of the reported case involving local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana are Environmental Conflict and Conservation and Control. The discussions that follow are an expository account of each, and a justification of why each of them is suited to contextualising the case.

### **3. Methodology**

This study is grounded in the Political Ecology theoretical framework to explore the multifaceted conflict between local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana. The methodology is structured to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the systemic factors driving this conflict and its implications for local economies and communities. The study specifically emphasizes two core theses of Political Ecology, namely the Power and Access to Resources as well as Environmental Justice. These theses are used to interrogate how industrial resource extraction reshapes access to resources, redistributes economic benefits, and imposes environmental and social costs. Political Ecology is appropriate because it goes beyond environmental impacts to interrogate the political, economic, and historical structures that shape access to and control over resources. It allows to critically examine how state and corporate interests converge in resource-rich zones and how these alliances often marginalize local populations under the guise of national development.

The study relies on secondary data sources to provide insights into the Ada East District case by offering contextual details about the stakeholders involved, resource control mechanisms, and socio-economic impacts. Academic and policy-related literature on Political Ecology and resource conflicts forms the basis for identifying recurring patterns and theoretical constructs applicable to this case. Data is analysed thematically, focusing on recurring patterns of conflict related to resource access, power asymmetries, and environmental justice. This involves coding qualitative data from reports, articles, and case studies to identify underlying drivers of conflict and their socio-economic and environmental impacts. Insights from the Ada East case are compared with findings from similar conflicts in other African countries. This approach highlights shared dynamics and context-specific variations, helping to generalize the findings within broader patterns of industrial resource extraction in Africa. Although the study relies primarily on secondary data, ethical considerations include ensuring accurate representation of data sources and respecting the narratives of affected communities as reported in the analysed materials. Though the analysis is constrained by the absence of primary data collection, the limitation is mitigated by drawing extensively on credible secondary sources.

### **4. Results and discussions**

#### ***4.1 Factors underpinning the Songor Conflict***

There has been an escalating conflict over the Songor Lagoon concession in Ghana, highlighting a complex struggle among local miners, the Ada East District Assembly and Electrochem Ghana. Electrochem Ghana's notification of its intention to commence salt mining prompted the Ada East District Assembly to order local miners to vacate the area, setting a deadline of December 31, 2023. In response, the Ada Songor Association vehemently opposed the eviction, challenging the Assembly to take forceful action and even asserting that they would have to be killed before complying. The Association emphasized the residential significance of the contested land, which encompasses several villages and towns. The eviction was framed as a direct threat to residents' homes.

The Association demanded that the District Assembly reverse its decision, arguing that they lacked viable alternatives and could not relocate without adequate provisions for their homes, farms, and livestock. Despite submitting petitions to higher authorities including the President, Parliament, and law enforcement agencies, their appeals remained unanswered. The Association called on the government to reconsider Electrochem's mining license, arguing that the granted concessions had failed to foster peace. They emphasized the community's steadfast resolve, making it clear that residents were

unwilling to relinquish even a small portion of land in the ongoing struggle over territory and livelihoods. Assessing the reported situation involving the local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana through the lens of Political Ecology, reveals a complex interplay of power dynamics, environmental governance, social justice, and economic interests. Political Ecology underscores how power relations shape environmental outcomes. In this context, the conflict arises from the contested allocation and control of land and resources around the Songor Lagoon. Electrochem Ghana's intent to mine in the area reflects the influence of powerful economic actors in determining land use, potentially at the expense of marginalized local communities.

The Ada East District Assembly, as a governing authority, plays a central role in land-use decision-making. Its directive for local miners to vacate the land illustrates the exercise of institutional power and raises questions about the inclusivity and fairness of these decisions. The resistance from local miners is deeply rooted in the understanding of land not merely as an economic asset but also as a place of residence and cultural identity. Their attachment to the land underscores its broader socio-cultural significance. Electrochem Ghana's mining interest is driven by economic motives, likely linked to national and global market demands for salt. This reflects how global economic forces can influence local resource management decisions, often to the detriment of community livelihoods. The local miners' resistance is grounded in a pursuit of justice, as they contend that the eviction would lead to homelessness and economic displacement. This situation raises critical questions about social equity, particularly the uneven distribution of the costs and benefits of resource extraction among different social groups.

Their defiance in the face of eviction orders represents an assertion of local agency in challenging perceived injustice and exclusion. The conflict also brings to the fore environmental concerns, as the proposed mining activities could have significant ecological implications for the Songor Lagoon and its environs. This aspect aligns with Political Ecology's focus on understanding the environmental consequences of economic decisions at both local and global levels. In conclusion, the dispute involving local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana exemplifies the complex interconnections among power, governance, socio-cultural values, and economic interests in environmental conflicts. The case serves as a critical example of how development-driven resource extraction can provoke contestation when it disregards local realities and equity considerations.

#### **4.2 Related Cases**

In their article on "Foreign involvement in small-scale gold mining in Ghana and its impact on resource fairness, Crawford and Botchwey (2016) discuss another environmental issue, this time with foreign engagement, particularly by Chinese miners, in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector. They asked two questions: What influence has foreign investment had on small-scale mining? What are the consequences for resource fairness? The short era of heavy foreign involvement, from 2008 to 2013, had a significant impact in that mechanisation and new technologies have transformed ASM in Ghana, making it no longer considered artisanal. Ghanaian miners are increasingly using equipment and practices introduced by Chinese miners, despite the fact that the presence of foreign miners has decreased since the Task Force.

The findings indicated an increase in resource inequity and injustice (Hilson & Maconachie, 2020). Foreign miners who generate 'fast money' from Ghana's gold undermine resource authority which leads to increased disparity in benefit distribution among Ghanaians. The state has incurred significant environmental costs while generating minimal money in return. ASM has the potential to dramatically impact Ghana's development, both directly through income generation for the poor and indirectly through government revenue collection. However, this has not happened. They also analysed why this circumstance developed and was permitted to happen despite illegalities.

The state's involvement is called into question in this case. A top environmental protection officer described the situation as "out of control" with a "culture of impunity". In 2012 and 2013, hundreds of foreign miners, mostly from China, illegally exploited Ghana's natural resources. After media coverage of local conflicts and environmental degradation, the then president appointed the Inter-Ministerial Task

Force to address the situation. However, the state had not been missing in the preceding years. Foreign involvement in Ghana's ASM sector was enabled despite regulatory bans due to rent-seeking by people in positions of authority and the sector's 'persistent informality'.

The case highlights the prevalence of 'everyday corruption' and rent-seeking activity among public officials in Sub-Saharan Africa. Traditional authorities have used their positions of authority to profit from galamsey operations. Foreign miners, particularly from China, were allowed to operate with impunity for a long time due to protection provided by authorities in exchange for private payments. Several state institutions have failed to uphold the law. However, this is not caused by weakness or a lack of capacity. Rather, government officials have 'turned a blind eye' to criminal mining in exchange for a cut of the lucrative gold extraction profits. Chiefs have sought personal benefit by selling land for mining. Public officials, even conventional institutions, increasingly prioritise private gain over public service. The Task Force's activities were characterised by corruption and opportunism, with army and police officers using their power to benefit themselves at the expense of Chinese miners. Corruption and rent-seeking by authority have hindered equitable utilisation of Ghana's gold resources in the small-scale industry.

The second case is found in "The Political Ecology of Farmer-Herder Conflict in Ghana: A Case Study of the Kwahu Afram Plains South District" by Otu and Sarfo (2023). The study employs a political ecology paradigm to highlight land conflicts between migrant farmers and nomadic herders, two "strangers" in the Kwahu Afram Plains District. It defies the generally held literature and notion that nomadic herders face significant land insecurity. According to the survey, migrant farmers in the study area have higher rates of land insecurity than nomadic herders. This is owing to their immigration history, their relationship with Kwahu landowners, which drives up the cost of land access, and tensions among landowners. Their studies revealed that the area's landownership structure is a major source of conflict. Because traditional authority controlled the majority of the land in the area, migrants' entrance was at the sole discretion of the chiefs. It is no secret that the area's rulers prefer to allot land to nomadic herders over settlement farmers. According to the study, nomadic herders are better off financially and politically than migratory farmers, giving them an advantage. However, the nature of their activity keeps these two sides in constant conflict. While farmers seek land in the hinterland to expand their enterprises, nomadic herders seek a large space to pasture their livestock. This leads to confrontation. The situation creates resentment between migrant farmers and nomadic herders, leading to tensions and eventually, war. The cases further explain the intricate connections between power, governance, socio-cultural values, and economic interests in environmental conflicts. Analyzing the situation through the Political Ecology theoretical lens provides insights into the underlying dynamics shaping the complex and contested landscape (Robbins, 2019).

#### *4.2.1 Environmental conflict*

Environmental Conflict is a theoretical framework within Political Ecology that explores the intricate interplay between environmental issues and social, political, and economic dynamics. This perspective acknowledges that environmental problems are not purely ecological but are deeply interwoven with human interactions, power relations, and competing interests over the use and control of natural resources. Environmental conflicts emerge when various stakeholders such as communities, industries, and governments hold divergent interests concerning the use, access, and management of natural resources. These conflicts can manifest across different scales, ranging from local disputes over land use to global tensions around resource extraction or climate change mitigation strategies. The drivers of environmental conflict include resource scarcity, economic interests, and environmental degradation. Limited availability of critical resources such as water, land, and minerals often leads to competition and conflict among different user groups. Conflicts typically arise when economic activities such as logging, mining, or agriculture come into conflict with conservation efforts or the rights of local communities. Environmental degradation, including pollution, deforestation, and habitat destruction, can also trigger disputes as communities seek to protect their ecosystems and means of livelihood.

Environmental conflicts present in various forms, such as water wars, disputes over indigenous land rights, and climate-induced displacement. Competition for water resources worsened by climate change

and population growth has resulted in conflicts among agricultural, industrial and urban users in different parts of the world. Disputes over land use between indigenous communities and external actors, often related to extractive industries, are prime examples of environmental conflicts. Likewise, rising sea levels and extreme weather events can lead to competition for habitable land and essential resources, especially in vulnerable coastal regions. Resolving environmental conflicts requires participatory approaches, inclusive decision-making, and the recognition of diverse perspectives. Sustainable resource management, equitable benefit-sharing, and the integration of environmental justice principles are vital for mitigating such conflicts and achieving long-term solutions.

The conflict involving local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana fits well within the framework of environmental conflict for several reasons. First, the situation clearly involves competing interests. The core of the conflict revolves around Electrochem Ghana's pursuit of salt mining for economic purposes, opposed against the livelihoods of local miners who depend on the contested land. This reflects the fundamental tenets of the environmental conflict thesis, which focuses on clashes emerging from conflicting uses of natural resources. Both parties claim rightful access to the resource, with local miners, natives of the area, being denied access to land they consider their own. This denial stems from the fact that the concession has been allocated to a commercial enterprise. Consequently, both Electrochem Ghana and the local miners assert their entitlement to mine the land. The directive issued by the Ada East District Assembly, mandating local miners to vacate the land, signals their endorsement of Electrochem's commercial operations. In response, the local miners have declared their readiness to resist eviction at all costs, even if it leads to fatal consequences.

Secondly, the case exemplifies issues of resource control, another key component of the environmental conflict thesis. The District Assembly's directive to vacate the land underscores ongoing tensions surrounding control over natural resources. This directive represents a critical juncture in the conflict as it highlights not only competing claims over land use but also the institutional authority governing such decisions. At the heart of this issue lies a clash between the economic incentives tied to mining, often aligned with broader development agendas and the traditional land use practices of local communities. The notion of control is further revealed in the District Assembly's influential role, prompting questions about the degree of participation by local miners in the decision-making process, the extent of consideration given to their welfare, and how economic development goals are being weighed against environmental and social sustainability. Furthermore, the urgency communicated through the directive reflects the intensifying nature of the conflict. The environmental conflict framework thus allows for a critical analysis of the governance and power structures shaping the allocation and control of resources.

Third, the case is situated within the environmental conflict framework due to the social and political dimensions embedded in the conflict. The environmental conflict thesis recognizes that such disputes are not only ecological but are also deeply political and social. In this case, a nuanced understanding of the social and political influences is necessary to develop holistic solutions. The local miners' defiance of the eviction order stems from their strong attachment to the land, which serves not only as a source of economic activity but also as a place of residence. The threat of eviction raises serious concerns about displacement and homelessness, underscoring the vital social function the land serves for the communities involved. Additionally, the potential displacement threatens to disrupt communal life and erode cultural practices tied to the land, revealing a deeply embedded social fabric. Politically, the conflict is shaped by the role of the Ada East District Assembly, whose decisions such as granting mining permission and issuing eviction orders, reflect the exercise of institutional power. This interplay of authority and resistance illustrates the relevance of the environmental conflict framework in unpacking the political dynamics at play.

Finally, the complexity of the decision-making involved, situates the case firmly within the environmental conflict thesis. This case encompasses difficult decisions regarding land use, environmental conservation, and economic development. The environmental conflict framework provides an effective lens through which to analyze the multiple, often competing, factors shaping these decisions and their implications for various stakeholders. It serves as a comprehensive analytical tool

for interpreting the complex dynamics of the case, shedding light on the conflicts that arise from resource competition, issues of control, and the broader social and political forces that influence environmental decision-making.

#### *4.2.2 Conservation and control*

Within the framework of political ecology, the conservation and control thesis examines the ways in which environmental governance and conservation policies lead to the exertion of control over natural resources. It emphasizes the power dynamics involved in decisions about environmental conservation, often revealing how policies designed to protect ecosystems can disproportionately favour certain interests and marginalize specific communities. The term "conservation and control" refers to the approach where conservation measures are implemented alongside regulatory controls to manage and protect natural resources. This often involves setting up protected areas, imposing regulations on resource use and controlling access to certain regions to ensure sustainable practices. Government plays a central role in conservation efforts. Governments are typically responsible for formulating and implementing policies, regulations, and initiatives aimed at preserving ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources.

Conservation and control theory recognizes that efforts to conserve natural resources often involve decision-making processes that dictate who has access to and control over these resources. Conservation measures, such as establishing protected areas or implementing sustainability policies, are influenced by political and economic interests. Conservation decisions are often influenced by economic interests, such as those of industries involved in resource extraction or tourism. This can lead to policies that prioritize economic gains over social equity. Powerful entities, including governments and corporations, control access to and use of natural resources through the establishment of regulations and policies, shaping the distribution of benefits and burdens. For instance, the creation of national parks, while aimed at conserving biodiversity, can result in the displacement of indigenous communities who have traditionally inhabited those areas. This illustrates how conservation measures can exert control over land use. Therefore, policies promoting sustainable resource management are designed to control resource exploitation. However, the implementation of such policies disproportionately affect certain groups, particularly those reliant on traditional resource use. It is worth noting that conservation and control can lead to the marginalization of communities that are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Restrictive conservation policies may limit their access to ancestral lands, affecting their cultural practices and economic well-being. The reported case involving local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana is well-suited for contextualizing within the framework of conservation and control for several reasons:

First of all is the directive to vacate the land. The Ada East District Assembly's directive for local miners to vacate the land aligns with the idea of conservation and control. It suggests a decision to prioritize economic interests related to mining over the established land use by local communities. The district assembly, as a governing body, wields authority in determining land use. This reflects a control mechanism that influences the direction of economic and environmental activities in the region. While the directive aligns with conservation and control, questions may arise about the potential environmental impacts of mining. Conservation efforts do not always consider the ecological consequences of economic activities, thus hindering a balance between development and environmental sustainability.

The second reason for situating this case within the conservation and control thesis is the impact on livelihoods. Conservation decisions can have significant implications for local communities' livelihoods. Analysing the case through the lens of conservation and control helps uncover how decisions to promote certain economic activities may disrupt existing livelihood practices. Thirdly, the case is situated within the conservation and control thesis because of the role of governance. The governance structure and decision-making processes regarding land use are central to the conservation and control thesis. Understanding how these decisions are made and who influences them is crucial for assessing the implications for different stakeholders.

Finally, the potential displacement of the local miners is a reason for situating the case within the conservation and control thesis. If mining operations proceed as planned, there is a potential for the displacement of local communities. This resonates with the consequences highlighted by conservation and control theory, where certain groups bear the brunt of conservation measures. The possibility for the displacement to truly happen is high because of the governing body, which happens to be the Ada East District Assembly. In conclusion, the conservation and control framework provides a valuable perspective for analyzing the complexities of the reported case. It sheds light on how decisions related to environmental governance and conservation exert control over resource access, impacting local communities and highlighting the need for equitable and inclusive decision-making processes.

#### ***4.3 Pragmatic solutions to address this problem within the context of sustainable development***

Sustainable development refers to a holistic approach to economic, social, and environmental progress that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Tomislav, 2018). This concept recognizes the interconnectedness of economic growth, social well-being and environmental health, emphasizing the importance of balance and integration in decision-making and development practices. Sustainable development acknowledges the finite nature of natural resources and aims to manage them responsibly. It promotes practices that minimize environmental impact, protect biodiversity, and address climate change. Economic development is a crucial component of sustainability. However, sustainable development emphasizes the importance of inclusive and equitable economic growth that benefits all members of society. It seeks to break the cycle of poverty and promote prosperity without depleting resources. Social aspects of sustainability focus on ensuring that development benefits are shared equitably among all members of society. This involves addressing issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice, and promoting inclusive practices that consider the well-being of vulnerable populations.

Sustainable development recognizes the intricate connections between economic, social, and environmental systems. Decisions in one area can have ripple effects across others and therefore, a comprehensive and integrated approach is essential. Sustainable development is oriented towards the long term, considering the impacts of current actions on future generations. It involves forward-thinking policies and practices that prioritize resilience and adaptability in the face of global challenges. Communities play a vital role in sustainable development. Engaging local communities in decision-making processes, respecting their traditional knowledge, and fostering a sense of ownership contribute to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Sustainable development embraces innovation and the responsible use of technology to find solutions to pressing challenges. This includes advancements in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and other fields that contribute to eco-friendlier practices.

Addressing the conflict between local miners, the Ada East District Assembly, and Electrochem Ghana within the context of sustainable development requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Therefore, Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue and Conflict Resolution, Economic Diversification and Incentives for Sustainable Practices and Green Economic Alternatives and Capacity Building are recommended pragmatic solutions to address this problem within the context of sustainable development.

##### ***4.3.1 Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue and Conflict Resolution***

Multi-stakeholder dialogue refers to a participatory process that involves representatives from different stakeholder groups engaging in open and inclusive discussions to address shared challenges or concerns. The primary purpose is to foster mutual understanding, build trust and generate collective insights. It recognizes the diversity of perspectives and expertise that different stakeholders bring to the table. Conflict resolution on the other hand involves the identification and alleviation of disputes or disagreements between parties through negotiation, mediation, or other peaceful means. The goal is to find mutually acceptable solutions, mitigate tensions, and prevent the escalation of conflicts. Conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining positive relationships and facilitating sustainable development.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue and conflict resolution are essential components of effective governance and decision-making processes in complex situations involving diverse stakeholders. This approach involves bringing together representatives from various groups, including government entities, local communities, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant actors, to engage in constructive conversations and address conflicts collaboratively. The proposed solution is therefore to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues involving the local miners, the Ada East District Assembly and Electrochem Ghana, environmental NGOs and other relevant actors. It is important to establish a conflict resolution mechanism to address grievances and find mutually agreeable solutions which ensures a win-win situation.

#### *4.3.2 Economic Diversification and Incentives for Sustainable Practices*

Economic diversification and incentives for sustainable practices are strategic approaches aimed at fostering resilient and environmentally conscious economic systems. These measures play a crucial role in steering communities and businesses towards sustainable development. Economic diversification involves expanding a region's range of industries or sectors, thus reducing dependence on a single economic activity. It encourages the development of multiple revenue streams and enhances overall economic resilience. The primary goal is to create a more robust and adaptable economy that can withstand external shocks, market fluctuations or changes in demand for specific goods or services. Incentives for sustainable practices refer to rewards or benefits provided to individuals, businesses, or communities that adopt environmentally friendly and socially responsible behaviours. These incentives are designed to encourage the adoption of practices that minimize negative environmental impacts, promote conservation, and contribute to the overall well-being of society.

It is therefore proposed that incentives and support programmes for economic diversification be introduced to encourage local miners to adopt sustainable practices. Financial incentives, training programs, and access to markets for eco-friendly products should also be made available. By promoting economic diversification, communities can reduce their reliance on a single economic activity, making them more resilient to changes. Incentives provide tangible benefits for embracing sustainability, creating a win-win scenario for both the community and the environment

#### *4.3.3 Green Economic Alternatives and Capacity Building*

Green economic alternatives and capacity building are key components of sustainable development strategies that aim to foster environmentally friendly practices and empower communities. The primary goal is to shift from traditional, resource-intensive practices to more sustainable models that contribute to environmental preservation and long-term resilience. Capacity building involves the development of knowledge, skills, and resources within individuals, communities or organizations to enhance their ability to address challenges, make informed decisions and pursue sustainable development. The aim is to empower stakeholders with the tools and expertise needed to embrace and implement sustainable practices effectively.

It therefore recommended that there should be an investment in the development of green economic alternatives for the local community, such as sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, or renewable energy projects. Simultaneously, capacity-building programs to enhance the skills of local miners, enabling them to diversify their economic activities, can be provided. This is because offering viable economic alternatives reduces dependency on a single sector, mitigating the potential negative impacts of displacing the local miners. Capacity building empowers local communities to embrace sustainable practices, fostering resilience and adaptability in the face of changing economic landscapes.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Through the lens of Political Ecology, this study has underscored the power dynamics that influence resource access and economic stability for marginalized groups. The literature reviewed indicates that industrial resource extraction often results in economic displacement, environmental degradation, and socio-cultural disruption, raising concerns about the sustainability and equity of such development initiatives. While compensation and resettlement programs exist, their effectiveness remains

inconsistent, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and small-scale entrepreneurs. These findings call for a more inclusive approach to resource management that prioritizes local economic resilience alongside national economic ambitions.

## 5.2 Limitation

The study focuses largely on the Ghanaian context, meaning that its conclusion does not fully capture variations in industrial extraction dynamics across different African regions with distinct political, economic, and cultural landscapes. The complexity of industrial extraction's socio-economic impact also means that long-term effects, particularly in relation to economic diversification and policy adaptation, require further longitudinal analysis.

## 5.3 Suggestion

Future research should incorporate primary field studies involving interviews, surveys, and case studies with affected communities to gain first-hand perspectives on the socio-economic disruptions caused by resource extraction. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple African countries could provide a broader understanding of how different policy frameworks influence economic displacement and livelihood restoration.

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