PhD Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Reconciling artisanal gold mining and food production in multi-functional landscapes: A case study in Ghana

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Problem definition

Artisanal/small-scale gold mining (ASM) is widespread in Africa. Its increasing occurrence in agricultural landscapes is raising concerns about its effect on farming, hence food security. It is more worrying when farmers engage in ASM as a safety net to avert poverty when agriculture fails to support income. Several studies have addressed the complex nexus between ASM and farming, but it remains inconclusive whether ASM enhances investments in agriculture, or whether detrimental effects prevail due to labour migration or environmental effects (soil erosion, deforestation and loss of farmland). Even less attention goes to the question of how food production and ASM can be reconciled in multi-functional landscapes through integrated landscape governance.

Research Question

How can food production and ASM be reconciled in smallholder livelihood strategies and through integrated governance of multi-functional landscapes?

Theoretical Framework

Livelihood diversification and de-peasantization are taken as starting points and linked to scholarly literature on integrated landscape approaches. This will be positioned in the broader inclusive development debate. The relations between the concepts and theoretical strands are visualised in Figure 1.

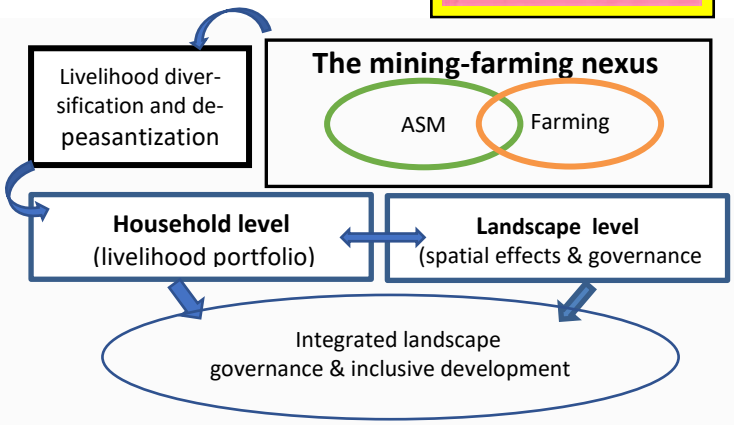

Fig. 1. Conceptual scheme

Methodology

Primary and secondary data will be collected from a critical realist viewpoint, using mixed methods for triangulation to enhance validity. Both quantitative (household surveys) and qualitative (interviews, participatory research methods and policy and literature review) will be employed, focusing on two districts in Ghana where ASM prevails.

Expected Results

Generate understanding of the effects of interactions between ASM and farming on food production at smallholder level and available land for food cropping at landscape level. Provide recommendations on safeguarding agriculture in a mining expanding landscape. Provide insights into the governance of the ASM/ farming nexus and identify entry points for integrated landscape governance.

Expected Graduation

February 2021