



# Taking Ownership of Big Ideas to Harness the Extractive Industries for Development

## Authors:

Joshua Sandin, Event Organiser and Researcher, Royal Holloway, [@JK\\_Sandin](#)

James McQuilken, Event Support and Researcher, University of Surrey, [@J\\_Mcquilken](#)

On Thursday 2nd November, over 50 PhD researchers, academics and practitioners gathered at Royal Holloway, University of London for the 2nd annual workshop on harnessing the extractive industries for development: [EX4DEV17](#). With a focus on sub-Saharan Africa, the aim was to share ideas and foster collaboration. Building on the themes of [last years' event](#), this year the focus was on the role of people, power, politics and big data.

## Using the resources available

Opening the workshop, we were treated to a 'resource showcase' with speakers demonstrating a range of open access online tools and data platforms. These included: [the 2017 Resource Governance Index](#); [Extractives Hub](#); [DELVE](#); [RAW Talks](#); and [GOXI](#). Each showing us how digital resources are being used to make the challenge of harnessing natural resources for development simpler, improve collaboration, and to support the often-marginalised voices of local communities.

## Creating linkages

Next, eight PhD researchers and presenters from industry spoke. We were reminded that all scales of extractive operations can and should have a role in realising meaningful development, yet the beneficial impacts need to reach local scales. Speakers proposed various approaches to creating deeper linkages between international extractive companies and local industry. Highlighted were mutually beneficial opportunities, such as enhancing local skill bases and employment opportunities through the funding of technical training and internships, as well as sourcing food for work canteens, parts for machinery, equipment, and building materials from local companies and producers. For this to happen, however, we were also reminded of the need for both regional and national regulatory environments that incentivise big business to source locally and help to foster the linkages at all scales.

To round up the day, [Professor Gavin Hilson's](#) keynote speech drew on the interaction between large and small-scale mining. Illustrating the importance of integrating [artisanal and small-scale mining](#) into national economies for wealth and job creation, he emphasised the challenge at hand in a policy environment and government mind-set that typically favours big business over smaller operators.



## Getting the right tools into the right hands

Echoing throughout the event, and brought to the fore by [Jeff Geipel](#) during the evening panel discussion, was that many of the ideas, data tools, and expertise are there, they just need to be placed into the right hands. But, how do we get these resources into the right hands?

[Dr Diane Tang-Lee](#) advocated the use of localised data in order to bring local issues to a global audience, while Will Macpherson who also sat on the panel, drew on his experience working with government to advocate for “bringing the right people together” to get resources into the hands of those that need them. Drawing the panel to a close, [Professor Caroline Digby](#) asserted that for transformation to occur officials, governments, and those in positions of power must also have the courage to take ownership of big ideas and look to solutions not problems: “We need brave leadership.”

## We are an Extractives Community

As expected, there is no definitive answer for harnessing the extractive industries. However, what did become clear from the workshop is that by drawing on the range of expertise, disciplines, sectors, and data beginning to become available we can work together to put the right tools in the right hands. With big ideas, we need bold leaders who are willing to drive positive change and solutions, and make faster, better linked progress at harnessing the extractives industries for national and local development.

## More details

- An overview of the workshop on Twitter can be found [here](#).
- Submissions open in December for the upcoming special section in the [The Extractive Industries and Society, An International Journal](#). More information can be found [here](#).
- The special section from last year’s workshop can be found here: [EX4DEV16](#)

## Acknowledgments

The author and event organiser, Joshua Sandin, would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for funding the event via their South-East Doctoral Training Centre. Further thanks go to the presenters and delegates for their participation and impassioned discussions, and in particular, the panellists; Professor Caroline Digby, University of Cape Town; Dr Diane Tange-Lee, International Council of Mining and Metals; Professor Gavin Hilson, University of Surrey; Jeff Geipel, Mining Shared Value; and William Macpherson, Adam Smith International for their insights. A final thank you goes to Professor Gavin Hilson, Dr Abby Hilson, James McQuilken, Allison Lindner, Terry Garde, Paul Fenton and everyone else behind the scenes for supporting the organisation and delivery of the event.

