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Critical Essay: (In)sensitive Violence, Development, and the Smell of the Soil: Strategic Decision-making of What?

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Prologue: the smell of the soil

As a native researcher I always felt that I was familiar with the smell of the soil, the green fields and the light morning wind in the villages of Bangladesh. The country consists of 68,000 villages, and even if someone grows up in a big city it is likely that they have been to one or more villages and have lived in one at some point. I have been to many villages, too; however, when I was a passenger in a charger (a three-wheeled, environment-friendly taxi that is run by a charger battery, locally known as a "charger") in Phulbari, traveling through narrow and beautiful roads winding their way through the paddy fields, I was amazed. I had never experienced a smell quite like that of the fields or the gentle breeze. It was the purest smell, and I realized how polluted our cities are and, how polluted some of the other villages of Bangladesh have become.

While my ride along some parts of these roads was refreshing, I realized that other parts of these roads smelled of coal. This is because of a mining project undertaken in the neighboring area called Barapukuria by the Bangladesh government. From the mining experience of Barapukuria, people learnt that a similar mining project proposed for Phulbari area would make them lose their lands, accommodation, everything, if they allowed the Phulbari project to go ahead. For example, the majority of the land that the Bangladesh government acquired in Barapukuria for mining is submerged in deep, polluted water. The inhabitants in the surrounding area of Barapukuria lack clean water as the groundwater levels have been destroyed because of mining.

Soon after my arrival in Phulbari to study a successful resistance by the villagers against an open-pit mining project, I realized the smell of the soil that I am talking about has a much deeper meaning to the traditional community of Phulbari. This deeper meaning cannot be

understood through the economic value of possessions. For example, one indigenous woman compared the idea of land to her mother. To her, "the land is like my mother's soul." She claims: "People do not sell a mother's soul for money. Do they? Phulbari people will never do that."

Introduction

Powerful actors such as multinational corporations (MNCs), mainstream non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and western aid agencies expend considerable efforts to dominate marginalized groups such as powerless communities and labor forces (e.g., Alamgir and Cairns, 2015; Banerjee and Jackson, 2017; Contu and Girei, 2014; Khan et al., 2007; Khan et al., 2010). Since dominations are a form of violence and oppression and, some cases, consequences of violence, understanding differentiated forms of violence is key to curbing organizational and managerial involvement in domination (Linstead, 1997; Maher, 2018; Varman and Al-Amoudi, 2016). In light of this, Zizek offers two fundamental conceptualizations of violence – *subjective* and *systemic* – which are worth studying.

Zizek (2008: 1) defines subjective violence as the use of force to inflict damage which is "performed by a clearly identifiable agent." Examples of subjective violence include injuring or killing someone. Subjective violence can also be impersonally or bureaucratically meted out (Galtung, 1969); for example, penal violence (executions of criminals) or the strategic bombing of a country for collective punishment. Again, Zizek defines systemic violence as "the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (2008: 1). This means that institutional (re)arrangements also inflict violence on marginalized groups. Social injustices such as gender-based discrimination and income inequality are examples of systemic violence. Butler (2004) nuances such argument through her

conceptualization of derealization. Derealization entails that certain victims are not considered as human beings or even do not exist in the discourse. For example, Guantanamo prisoners are victims of institutional arrangement that do not confer them any rights in the judicial system; it is also difficult to represent them in mainstream media because of institutional censorship (Butler, 2004, 2009). Zizek (2008) contends that systemic violence causes greater damage than subjective violence; therefore, his conclusion is that easily recognizable subjective violence needs less scholarly attention. van der Linden (2012), however, refutes this idea; he points out that any violence can be equally harmful. I argue that such assessment is difficult to make in general but depends on how we conceptualize violence, from whose perspective, and under what conditions.

More importantly, my fundamental concern is that Zizek's (2008) conceptualization does not fully explore important aspects of subjective violence such as limited traceability of violent actions. Zizek (2008) naively thinks that all subjective violence are visible: But I argue that, as various powerful actors and their influential agents (who often work as third parties and claim neutrality) participate in designing and performing violent activities, certain aspects of violence are difficult to trace, meaning that it is difficult to identify exactly who did what to commit a subjective violence. Because of this limited traceability of actions, certain consequences of subjective violence remain invisible for a long period of time. Further, I argue that subjective violence can have devastating effects which go beyond the physical and mental harm, affecting even the socio-emotional situations of marginalized groups. Based on this perspective, my aim is to define and conceptualize a form of subjective violence with limited traceability and invisible negative consequences, which I term 'insensitive' violence, and show its implications for marginalized groups.

I define insensitive violence as those actions which are committed (e.g., killing and injuries) with limited traceability and (usually) under ideological influence, causing invisible harm to the family or community members of initial victims (who were subject to killing/injury). Since actions of powerful actors tend to be ideologically motivated, such actions overrule the ideology of marginalized groups. In effect, the ideology of powerful actors damages the emotions and feelings shared by members of marginalized groups, and thus inflicts emotional wounds. Emotional wounds are defined as invisible dark marks in the collective archetypal memory of communities that, in the long run, affect interpersonal relationships of community members. For example, this process may create mistrust among members in a community or distort the existing belief system.

Insensitive violence manifests in emotional wounds to various members of a community to perpetuate collective effects of violence. This then is intensified in the form of intimidation, discrimination and threats towards marginalized groups so that their collective ideals are destroyed. In the worst case, these wounds are often inter-generationalized as a collective memory (c.f., Olick and Robinson, 1998), meaning the wound is handed down to and inherited by future members of the initially affected community. However, for ideological reasoning, certain powerful actors hold the misguided belief that they must inflict such violence to contribute to the development of deprived societies. They find that marginalized groups perceived as uneducated and even foolish are unwilling or too unruly to understand their own benefits; therefore, insensitive violence only guides the marginalized groups to the right direction (c.f., Said 1978; Spivak 1988, 1999). This is specifically apparent in strategic decision-making of firms. For example, MNCs in extractive industries often use insensitive violence to inflict emotional wounds so that exploitation of irreplaceable natural resources such as farming lands,

forests, and rivers is ensured, and managing marginalized groups becomes cost effective (e.g., Mbembe, 2003; Mir et al., 1999; Prasad, 2003). MNCs claim– or some in cases even believe – that they make such decisions for the sake of development and the greater societal good.

While such actions successfully enable a number of MNCs to maximize profit, Phulabri resistance in Bangladesh (the context is explained in the next section) is an extraordinary case which reveals the negative implications of insensitive violence against marginalized groups. This also points out how insensitive violence triggers a different set of negative emotional reactions that enables marginalized groups to resist powerful actors in different ways. Although my main focus is to conceptualize insensitive violence so that I highlight limited traceability of certain violent activities of powerful actors – i.e. insensitive violence, I also discuss the misinterpretations of development perspectives that encourage recursive use of such violence at the expense of communities in terms of environmental damage and emotional degradation.

Context

In early 2000, the Phulbari mining project was proposed by the Bangladesh government. Asia Energy (a British mining firm listed on the AIM – London Stock Exchange; in January 2007 Asia Energy changed its name to GCM Resources) had the support of the Bangladesh government to dig up to 572 million tons of coal (Huggler, 2006). The project was worth US$1.1 billion and it was one of the largest mining projects of its type in the world. It was opposed by thousands of locals (represented by poor people such as farmers, day laborers, rickshaw pullers, van drivers, shop keepers, sex workers, settlers and tribes) in Dinajpur district, as they feared that they would lose their land and livelihoods if the project went ahead. On August 31, 2006, in protest against the proposal, more than 80,000 local people held a demonstration. When

protestors came out onto the streets, violence broke out, and three people were shot dead by the Bangladesh government's armed force (Falguni, 2009). Since then the Phulbari project has been at a standstill and Asia Energy is still awaiting a decision from the current government. The Awami League, the largest opposition party in 2006 when the violence took place, now holds power. Although the Awami League opposed the Phulbari mining project in 2006, it is currently in favor of the scheme.

The traditional communities of Phulbari see this movement as a victory. Nevertheless, such victory comes with a price. My interactions with local people reveal that the consequences of violence still haunt them; they have been left with a significant level of distrust towards outsiders and this affects their normal lives. For example, before entering the field I had to contact multiple political and community leaders and convince them that I did not work for corporations or NGOs and that I was simply a researcher.[1]

While I was able to establish a fair amount of trust in these relationships, I constantly sensed that some of the locals, especially indigenous people and settlers, saw me as an outsider. Accordingly, when they opened up during interviews, they regularly reminded me how corporate agents such as NGOs and lobbying groups had attempted to steal information or convince them to give up their lands through various guises. They hoped I would not do something similar. Their valid concerns made me realize that the villagers had been suffering from deep emotional wounds caused by insensitive violence. This is the moment my initial thoughts, such as, *I am in Phulbari just to study a successful resistance*, were challenged from the perspective that I could

[1] This article is part of a larger project on the Phulbari movement for which, to date, with the help of six research assistants (RAs), I have gathered 140 interviews. I started my fieldwork in Phulbari in June 2016. While my primary research site was Phulbari, I also visited and interviewed various respondents in Barapukuria, in Dinajpur, Dhaka (capital city of Bangladesh) and in London, UK (where Asia Energy holds its Annual General Meeting or AGM), as well as a network of resident international activists who are in solidarity with the Phulbari movement.

truly relate myself to the smell of the soil as the villagers experienced it. I felt that if I did not encapsulate the deep emotional aspects of locals and simply studied this context through the lens of a social movement, I may end up producing an incomplete picture of Phulbari resistance. In other words, I argue that representation of marginalized groups is not only achieved through conventional and structured writing (Suddaby, 2018). As much as we need to follow rigor, structure and generalizability to produce robust research, we also need to be immersed with our subjects in a way that we do not only rely on observable phenomena (Katz 1993). For example, interpretations of emotional wounds are difficult to capture objectively. How can one start to conceptualize deeply disturbing elements of violence which are designed to hide truths? The answer lies in the fact that by fully immersing oneself within contexts and people's circumstances and world views, one can present a better critique of the fundamental ideas of development that dominate text books and out dated strategic practices that firms often perform as rituals (see critically, Rhodes and Bloom, 2018; Stein, 2001).

Problematization of development perspectives to conceptualize aspects of insensitive violence

Now, I problematize both economic and human perspectives of development and their influence on the strategic decision-making of firms to elaborate the causes and functionalities which constitute insensitive violence and its recursive occurrence; and powerful actors' failure to act diligently given their knowledge of and complicities in designing and performing the insensitive violence.

Influence of economic development on strategic decision-making of firms

The mainstream management scholars insist that MNCs must assist poor economies to develop (London, 2009; Prahalad, 2004). In other words, growth of a developing economy relies on the economic flourishing of its poor populations (Bhagwadi and Panagariya, 2013; Friedman, 1970). Such arguments, for instance, have lent prominence to instrumental stakeholder theory in the management field (Henisz et al., 2014; Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004). The instrumental approach denotes that firms consider all their stakeholders in order to increase efficiency and profitability (Jones, 1995). In other words, strategic decision-making of firms considers marginalized groups as long as these groups enable firms to be profitable (Mitchell et al., 1997).

One of the inherent problems of the above argument, though, is that firms can be deceptive or resort to greenwashing (Laufer, 2003) to claim they care about marginalized groups. Since firms' claims are not legally bounded, firms' claims of engagement with marginalized groups are mostly strategic (Chowdhury et al., 2018). For example, Asia Energy initially (around 2004 and 2005) told the Phulbari people that they would compensate them by 400 to 500 times more money than the existing value for their resources such as trees and paddy fields, if the Phulbari accepted Asia Energy's compensation offer and re-located elsewhere. In addition, they were told that locals would be given jobs in the mining field. These were purely instrumental offers to persuade Phulbari people to give up their lands and other resources. If Asia Energy was successful in persuading the Phulbari people – i.e. if the instrumental approach was successful – the Phulbari people might receive handsome compensation (although the Phulbari turned down such offers). The long-term problem with this approach was that, particularly if Asia Energy was successful, it could easily destroy irreplaceable paddy fields, ponds and nearby river, and the world's largest mangrove forest. Thus, Asia Energy's arguments about economic development such as employment creation and contribution to GDP – all are valid; but they bring miasma

such as pollution and uncleanliness into the process of convincing marginalized groups. Since miasma is described as a contagious state of pollution – material, psychological and spiritual (Gabriel, 2012), it not only has the ability to destroy the environment but also to paralyze human potentials. This spreads the smell of rottenness throughout the entirety of the system in which firms operate; it turns the fresh smell of soil into the smell of coal to pollute not only the air but also the actions that firms perform in relation to other powerful actors to exploit poor people and the environment (c.f., Stein, 2007).

Although the instrumental stakeholder approach to date has not worked for Asia Energy, worryingly some research shows: These types of instrumental approach work well for many mining firms (e.g., Henisz et al., 2014). Nonetheless, when the instrumental approach does not work, MNCs may resort to insensitive violence. This is not only limited to the case of Asia Energy; a well-documented case of Shell in Nigeria can also be considered. Since early 1990, the Ogoni people of Nigeria began to accuse Shell of environmental destruction and of taking away the livelihoods of local people in the name of oil exploration. They also claimed that Shell was complicit in the Nigerian government's execution of nine Ogoni activists, including Nobel Peace Prize nominee Ken Saro-Wiwa, during 1995 (see Boele et al. (2001a, b) for more details). Shell, however, denied its involvement in the execution of these activists. While Shell might have told a version of the truth, the firm still did not take any proactive actions based on ethical necessity to stop the execution of the Ogoni activists (Boele et al., 2001a). This case entails that although insensitive violence does not always come through the direct involvement of MNCs, they may resort to other powerful actors such as government agencies to perform violence.

MNCs commit insensitive violence as they envisage two plausible long-term scenarios: (1) They not only try to acquire lands to extract resources but also (2) they need to dominate

marginalized groups even after the land acquisition (if they are ultimately successful in running mining operations) to ensure uninterrupted mining activities. In other words, when instrumental stakeholder scholars (e.g., Henisz et al., 2014) claim that marginalized groups happily cooperate during successful/ongoing mining activities, such argument deserves adequate scrutiny (see e.g., Banerjee, 2003). In other words, just because poor communities have schools, hospitals and employment due to mining when a mining firm starts its operation does not mean that marginalized groups willingly gave their permission to carry out mining. There could be untraceable threats, intimidation and even emotional wounds that forced communities to give permission for mining. Therefore, a snapshot of corporate engagement with marginalized groups must not be termed as success. If termed as a success, such research output can be subject to biased understanding of what really matters to marginalized groups; for example, Chagnon (1988) (described by the New York Times as one the most controversial anthropologists) claimed that Yanomami (a Brazilian-Venezuelan tribe) men who were killers had more wives and children than men who were not (Eakin 2013). By citing this argument Chagnon (1968) implied that male aggression and violence is the principal driving force behind the evolution of culture. The Brazilian Anthropological Association (BAA) warned that,

> "Wide publicity about Yanomami 'violence' in racist terms . . . is being used by the powerful lobby of mining interests as an excuse for the invasion of these Indians' lands" (BAA cited in Eakin, 2013).

Moreover, Lizot (1985, p. xiv) notes:

> "The Yanomami are warriors; they can be brutal and cruel, but they can also be delicate, sensitive and loving. Violence is only sporadic; it never dominates social life for any length of time, and long peaceful moments can separate two explosions".

Paradoxically, biased results help to develop certain assumptions regarding marginalized groups (see Jack and Westwood, 2006) which in turn creates an unfortunate meta-reality where

firms consistently ignore marginalized groups and their feelings, contexts, daily lives, experiences, customs, values, and history when making strategic decisions (Medina, 2013). In these cases, what really counts for firms is profit-maximization ideology, irrespective of whether development is needed or even desired by marginalized groups.

Unrealized perspective of freedom and choice in human development: shared emotions

To understand how certain aspects of freedom and choice of marginalized groups are unrealized, first, I discuss what freedom and choice really mean to the Phulbari people and second, I show how their interpretations of freedom and choice reject the notion of Sen's (1999) perspective of human development. By doing so, I argue that the *smell of the soil* is embedded within the hearts and minds of marginalized groups; that is feelings of a group of people encapsulated within a particular emotional expression such as joy, sorrow, anxiety, or fear (c.f., Bar-Tal, 2001) – such feelings which are experienced by an entire community in a given period of time can be termed as shared emotions (see von Scheve and Ismer (2013) for details). These shared emotions develop a localized emotional structure which ensures the presence of community spirit, stability and solidarity among the marginalized groups. However, shared emotions of marginalized groups are not only ignored in economic development literature but also from the human development perspective (see also Islam, 2011). Thus, I contend that shared emotions among marginalized groups need to be realized and respected. This means that Sen's approach must be, if not also rejected alongside the economic perspective, at least complemented by the emotional dimension theorized here, which can go a long way towards ensuring the true welfare of marginalized people and their environments.

The Phulbari people I interacted with referred frequently to the freedom to choose how they want to live their lives. The ordinary people of Phulbari are happy with what they have. They think their land gives them enough crops to live a good life; their work (even that of the sex workers) gives them freedom to live a life they believe is adequate for them. They are happy that their children go to state-run schools and that they have district hospitals. They do not feel the need for more schools and hospitals. A middle-aged farmer emphasizes this: "What else do we need?" He thinks: "[Phulbari people] just need peace." They want to "breathe fresh morning air for the rest of their life." From his past experience, he states that "large-scale mining projects such as Barapukuria did not bring any extra benefits to the community." For example, they have the same old hospital and school. Paradoxically, environmental devastation and some level of distorted social cohesion have occurred in their communities since the Barapukuria mining project began. For example, an older woman that I talked with, who was in her mid-70s, claimed that she received some compensation when the government forcefully acquired her land for the Barapukuria coal project, although, as she lost her fertile land to the Bangladesh government, her children could not afford to stay with her. Now she has neither land nor her children (who she thought would look after her during her old age). She reflects:

> "What am I supposed to do with compensation money? My land and children were everything. The government took my land, and my children had to abandon me because they did not find any job [although the government promised everyone would get a job in the mining field]. No one remains to look after me. Even most of my neighbors left me. What is the point of this life? No one really understands what I am going through."

Moreover, sex workers, for instance, fear that the development would simply displace them from the Phulbari. They would have to move to a different location for their livelihoods, which would potentially make them more vulnerable. From past experience of Barapukuria, they had learnt that – being sex workers and thus heavily stigmatized – they have no chance of

securing jobs in the mining fields. Rather, the displacement potentially means that they would not only lose their current clientele in the Phulbari, but their safety and the security of their lives would also be subject to risk. They do not know how people in a new location would react to them. But in the Phulbari, they are already aware of their vulnerabilities and know how to navigate the dangers they may encounter. After all, they were brought up on the lands of the Phulbari.

The above perspective can be explained through the human development perspective or capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2000; Nussbaum and Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999, 2005). The capabilities approach is referred to as the moral significance of an individual's capability of achieving the kind of life she values. Accordingly, emphasis on areas such as health and education is more important for individuals than emphasis on economic growth alone (see with caution Sen (1999, 2005)). Ironically, by following Sen's (1999) idea of human development, firms stress their contribution to human factors through the development of more schools and hospitals. Firms also claim they create such infrastructure in mining areas so that marginalized groups become healthy and educated so as to voice their concerns without fear and prejudice and thus provide a better potential to exercise democratic rights.

Such development, in Sen's opinion, increases the wellbeing of both the individuals and societies. An individual's wellbeing increases because she has access to basic functionalities such as schools and hospitals, and, thus, her functioning in the society is improved through the development of various capabilities and skills. Societal wellbeing increases because when individuals are able to make use of their capabilities the aggregate outcomes improve societal wellbeing. A society then has educated, healthy and skilled populations that are more aware of their fundamental rights.

Sen's (1999) idea has much merit compared to what mainstream economists (e.g., Bhagwadi and Panagariya, 2013; Friedman, 1970) and management scholars (e.g., Henisz et al., 2014; London, 2009; Prahalad, 2004) offer in regard to economic development. However, from the perspective of the Phubari people, the notion of Sen's development is also problematic because such notion creates opportunities for firms to inflict insensitive violence in three ways.

First, marginalized groups have rights to choose who would bring wellbeing into their area. They do not need to rely on corporate or NGO interventions for development. Government must engage in coordinated communication with locals to set the development agenda of an area (Chowdhury and Wilmott, 2018). Government simply cannot bypass the local people and assign third parties to develop essential infrastructure to secure democracy (Chowdhury and Willmott, 2018; Karim, 2011).

Second, since Sen (1999) assumes weak institutions exist in developing countries, it means third-party interventions such as NGO assistance are helpful for any developing country government. From this perspective, Sen highly regards the contribution of mainstream NGOs. Some management scholars (e.g., Scherer and Palazzo, 2007) substantiate such argument on third parties by noting that firms need third-party mandates to address corporate responsibility concerns, while others (e.g., Palepu and Khanna, 2010) argue that intermediaries such as market research firms and credit card systems are needed in developing countries to increase efficiency between firms and stakeholders and to overcome problems of institutional weaknesses.

However, the idea that third parties such as NGO mandates allow firms to be responsible is highly problematic: It disregards the fact that firms and NGOs are partners of same neoliberal agenda in certain contexts (Fernando, 2005; Karim, 2011). The same logic applies to corporate intermediaries that Palepu and Khanna (2010) propose as solutions to institutional inefficacy.

Therefore, none of these parties (e.g., firms, NGOs and corporate intermediaries) challenges each other when their interests overlap (Fernando, 2005; Karim, 2011). More worryingly, NGO activities often overlook the real needs of marginalized groups (whereas corporate intermediaries often do not even take marginalized groups seriously at all). This means that marginalized groups are left alone to fight for their real emotional needs if they want to pursue their freedoms and right to choose.

Evidently, when I was in Phulbari, people showed significant anger against NGOs. This was because Asia Energy hired several NGOs to convince local people to give up their lands for mining. While NGOs had such contracts from Asia Energy, these NGOs never disclosed this information to the locals; rather, NGOs deceptively interacted with locals to collect information that would favor Asia Energy. Moreover, NGOs used such information to legitimize the mining project. In this regard, a prominent Bangladeshi activist notes: "Even though some of the Bangladeshi NGOs are world famous, none of these NGOs neither condemned the Phulbari mining project nor the killings in Phulbari". Only the executive director of Action Aid, Nasreen Huq, was vocal against the Phulbari mining project but allegedly she was killed (Doward and Haider, 2006). She was rammed by a car which was driven by her own driver, a fellow Action Aid employee (Doward and Haider, 2006). However, Jane Moyo, head of media at Action Aid who was in Bangladesh with Nasreen shortly before she died stated: "We think it was a tragic accident" (Doward and Haider, 2006). Hence, not so surprisingly, police tried to record her death as accidental but later brought the case under a murder investigation (Doward and Haider, 2006). Some of the Action Aid employees "privately" stressed that "it was not Nasreen's place to campaign against the mine", since the NGO does not deal with environmental issues in developing countries (Doward and Haider, 2006). Such claims arose because it was alleged that

Action Aid was under pressure not to protest against the Phulbari project and received threats from a donor country about potential funding cut (Doward and Haider, 2006). Nonetheless, when the Phulbari people learned about the alleged involvement of some NGOs and market research firms with Asia Energy, they restricted NGO activities in certain villages of Phulbari. This in effect, indicates that firms and their collaborative partners such as foreign donors, NGOs and corporate intermediaries can equally be sources of insensitive violence and undermine the democratic rights of marginalized groups.

Third and more importantly, Sen's (1999) idea of development does not consider aspects of shared emotions such as feelings for land, smells, nature, or even mental peace and the notion of sacrifices (as repeatedly mentioned by the Phulbari people), as vital factors of human development. Sen (1999) assumes that stability and mental peace occur through human development – therefore, emotional perspectives of what matters to marginalized groups are insignificant (see critically Goodwin and Jasper, 1999). Unfortunately, this affords powerful actors a grand opportunity to suggest that human development fulfils the necessary needs of marginalized groups and that shared emotions do not need to be included separately in the development, whatever form this takes. However, I gathered completely opposite evidence that counters such casual disregard of shared emotions. This became more evident to me as I talked with the Phulbari people and I realized some people were willing to risk their lives to protect their land. During my fieldwork, I felt that the smell of the soil was the main driving force for this passionate resistance and it symbolizes what freedom really means to the protesters from the traditional communities. Moreover, when I talked with the mother of one of the dead activists (a fourteen-year-old boy who had been killed during the protest of 2006), I could see how deeply depressed the mother was about the loss of her boy, even after 10 years, yet she was surprisingly

happy about the fact that her "son gave life for the soil of Phulbari." Although she did not talk much during the interview, her expression of this sacrifice was bold and brave.

Phulbari people empathically, and with sufficient reasoning, emphasize that they want to live a life without the interference of others, even if others, in particular those with power, think that the local community is in need of a better life. Thus, even the notion of sacrifice, as a vital element of shared emotions, rejects the needs of human development. Otherwise, so-called developmental ideals in different names and guises will continue to generate insensitive violence.

Unintentionality framing under strategic decision-making processes perpetuates insensitive violence

When insensitive violence is committed powerful actors can claim unintentionality of their decisions or actions to take advantage of a situation. To highlight the meaning of unintentionality in the context of this article, I want to illustrate what intentionality means when violence in committed. For example, if a state acquires the lands of its citizens forcefully, this is considered an intentional act. Again, a state may acquire land from its citizens by influencing them to give consent (e.g., refer to the case of Barapukuria). In this situation, even if the state secures the consent of its citizens (c.f., Gramsci, 1971), this may not be willful consent. Citizens might not have had any other options than to give the state their consent because, for instance, their lives were under threat, or government agents may have misled the citizens by giving false or manipulative information. In this scenario, I argue that the state still performed violence intentionally. However, there might be a scenario where the state truly thinks that its actions bring development to a community for the wider good, and it may justify the process of

influencing marginalized people as normal institutionalized practices. But this type of unintentional violence – 'unintentional' from the perspective that the state *truly* believes that acquiring lands is essential and serves all citizens of a country better – also causes significant harm to the victims.

Similarly, what if, for instance, a firm considers that development is necessary and sees it as the only way to advance a society? Accordingly, it must adopt neoliberal economic viewpoints (e.g., Bhagwadi and Panagariya, 2013; Friedman, 1970; Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004) in its decision-making processes. Therefore, this firm may pursue neoliberal development as a moral goal to liberate the (perceived) poor in deprived areas (Bhagwadi and Panagariya, 2013). The above argument was iterated by some Bangladeshi MPs from the current ruling party, who suggested that the economic development of a country cannot be halted simply for a few people (BDNews24.com, 2010; Energy Bangla, 2010). A similar negative implication emerges when a firm justifies mining activities by using the human development perspective. For example, Asia Energy argues that it wants the mining project in Phulbari because this would generate better societal wellbeing as more Bangladeshis would enjoy electricity; and the Bangladesh government would receive corporate tax meaning more funding for improved educational and medical services, which are important factors for human development.

However, my time at Asia Energy's AGM in London gave me the impression that executives and shareholders (except activist shareholders) are reluctant to differentiate between the nuances of traditional communities' perspectives of reality, life, the significance of land and the emotional value of shared community memories compared to what firms believe is development. A former executive of Asia Energy informally mentioned to me that they and another top executive of Asia Energy

> "were laughing at the poor villagers of Phulbari when they saw them at the road side protesting."

The executive further articulated that they had no idea

> "why these people were protesting. They were too poor, too uneducated. We wanted to mine Phulbari to give them better lives. They were denying themselves good lives. That made us laugh about these people."

The organizational process of mocking marginalized groups turns them to "abjects" (Kristeva, 1982), a process through which firms 'cast off' vulnerable people and treat them with disgust and pity. Thus, such thoughts and actions led to insensitive violence in Phulbari, because this process influenced Asia Energy to act against the Phulbari people by any and all means. While the former executive wanted to persuade me by framing mining as a means to drive human development, I find it difficult to believe that they did not comprehend the (true) expectations of Phulbari people. This generates a serious concern: Firms' unintentionality claims to justify violent acts through the help of development theories. This gives them what they consider to be the leverage to act instrumentally and treat their subjects derogatively. Also, from this perspective, the concept of human development is as problematic as the idea of economic development is. The illustration of the former executive's view reveals that a case for instrumental strategic decision-making is persuaded through both perspectives of development – i.e. economic and human development. This means that if the inherent meaning of a theory possesses fundamental flaws (i.e. economic perspective) or even weaknesses and provides ample room for misrepresentation (e.g., human development perspective), this may also lead to insensitive violence.

When the opportunity of misrepresentation exists firms or other powerful actors must pose equitable questions to their marginalized stakeholders, which can resolve a good degree of

confusion. For example, they can ask marginalized stakeholders, for whom the development is taking place, whether they have given their willful consent to allow powerful beneficiary parties (e.g., firms and governments) to carry out mining projects. If the answer is negative, then there is no legitimate and moral case for development. However, sometimes marginalized groups might not know what is really best for them; for example, they might not know about the potential for environmental damage of their areas and long-term health problems caused by mining activities and may give their consent by thinking of economic development. This means that, when equitable questions are asked, those questions need to cover contextual and long-term issues so that differentiated views are considered in decision-making processes. If powerful actors deprive marginalized groups of access to contextual and other secondary information, which makes a difference to if and how marginalized groups provide consent, then there is little point in asking those questions in the first place.

Implications of insensitive violence

I emphasize the importance of studying instances of insensitive violence which are difficult to detect because of limited traceability and its consequences. For instance; emotional wounds, are often invisible. In the short term, emotional wounds that are caused by extreme psychological pressure, intense humiliation and intimidation can leave victims or their families/communities experiencing fear, shock, paralysis and helplessness (c.f., van der Linden, 2012). In the long run, such wounds impede one's physical and mental functions and capabilities. Therefore, I stress that these victims of insensitive violence are not removed from a discourse contrary to what Butler (2004) would argue through her conceptualization of derealization. Instead, I find that victims are an essential ingredient to construct a discourse among powerful actors who claim

they seek opportunities to improve the lives of these victims through development. Without victims a discourse would not even exist. And if a discourse does not exist, no development projects would take place. In other words, many unjustifiable developments happen due to a construction of discourse that intends to be aligned with the ideologies of powerful actors for their personal benefit. Below, I discuss two main implications of insensitive violence.

Insensitive violence perpetuates systemic violence which in effect increases the vulnerability of marginalized groups

I attest that insensitive violence disrupts the normal and peaceful lives of marginalized communities and ultimately perpetuates systemic violence. Disruptions to normal lives affect communities in different ways. For example, family members of the bullet-wounded activist share no less trauma and helplessness than the actual gunshot victim. Family members still live in fear for his safety as they believe this activist remains under watch by Asia Energy agents. The state pursues allegedly false legal cases against him. This destroys normality in the day-to-day life of this family. More worryingly, the trauma of losing three activists and being consistently monitored by Asia Energy in various guises and legal cases filed to harass (i.e. *systemic* violence) Phulbari people in effect destabilizes everyday life activities of the community members. For example, among the communities, people are suspicious of each other, as they often feel that certain movement leaders are betraying the Phulbari movement. Therefore, villagers are constantly searching for unknown enemies both within and outside their communities.

I emphasize that if Asia Energy did not commit insensitive violence in collaboration with government agencies and NGOs, Phulbari people would not be in this situation. Since the effects

of this violence have limited traceability and are hard to objectify, one can be tricked into believing that any violence that does not look like subjective violence is systemic. If that is the case, firms cannot prevent such violence because it is a system failure where various institutions fail collectively; it is not only firms alone that cause harm. In reality, an individual powerful actor (e.g., Asia Energy) controls various factors that could ensure the avoidance of incidents of insensitive violence; however, whether they choose to do so depends on how they make strategic decisions or influence other actors with whom they collaborate or associate directly and indirectly. For example, Asia Energy might suggest that they did not commit insensitive violence themselves; it was the government itself that directly tried to acquire lands from the villagers through violence, not Asia Energy. However, it is not so hard to gauge (even though we need to rely on our interpretation) whether Asia Energy (directly or indirectly) influenced the government or other powerful actors in a way that caused harm to the community.

Whether Asia Energy influenced the government in positive or negative ways is always a subjective concern, meaning that this is a serious weakness in our understanding of how violence is used covertly or with limited traceability by certain powerful actors (c.f., Bandura, 1999). The deeper we look into the case of the Phulbari, the clearer it becomes that insensitive violence needs more focus, because it is a grey area where firms commit violence in a unique manner (e.g., utilizing third parties to create emotional wounds). Unfortunately, such violence often goes unchallenged because it is difficult to observe a firm's actual behavior immediately after the violence is committed; it is only retrospectively and in the long run that we see the devastating effects of the insensitive violence. This has two implications.

First, as soon as the firm commits to *insensitive* violence it perpetuates the *systemic* violence. Since systemic violence is committed through political and economic means, firms' use

of insensitive violence encourages powerful institutions to create or maintain an abusive mechanism that maintains violent activities. Accordingly, for instance, Bangladesh government is keen to acquire lands for Asia Energy even though the government knows its actions are against marginalized group's wishes. In other words, in a subtle way, firms influence the process of strengthening the institutional norms and values in the form of social injustice which unfortunately becomes deeply embedded not only into their routines system (because firms learn over time that governments prefer development above else) but also influences powerful institutions to act in similar manner as the firms do.

Second, another common consequence of insensitive violence is that long-term effects such as emotional wounds do not necessarily receive media attention, unless such issues become significant (Andrews and Caren, 2010; Rohlinger, 2002). This situation also perpetuates systemic violence because the powerful actors then more easily abuse political systems and employ cultural manipulation against marginalized groups in the absence of constant media and public scrutiny. This, however, does not mean that corporate violence goes unchecked (Varman and Al-Amoudi, 2016) for perpetuity. The time lag between insensitive violence and reaching the mainstream media creates a chasm and, during this temporary period, marginalized groups form collective ideals to resist and make use of protest strategies (Piven and Cloward, 1977). While some marginalized groups are successful in developing resistance during this period (Chowdhury et al., 2018), many also fail because the chasm allows room for powerful actors to intensify emotional wounds to perpetuate systemic violence. In other words, during this period, firms – for instance – try to make use of powerful institutions in a way that furthering of emotional wounds would destroy the confidence of marginalized groups. For example, after the killings of three activists, rather than showing any empathy to victims or their families, Asia Energy claimed the

Phulbari people marched to destroy its office. From this, the firm employed further institutional intervention so that its offices in Phulbari did not come under attack. This in effect gave license to the police to file legal cases and pursue multiple arrest warrants to lock some of the Phulbari activists behind bars. In other words, rather than investigating the cause of the killings, the state created systemic violence in the form of fear so that the Phulbari people could not protest or seek justice.

Sensitive violence

When powerful actors commit insensitive violence, marginalized groups either become numb or reactionary. Although management scholars mostly focus on participatory protests (see den Hond and de Bakker, 2007 for details) such as socio-spatial solidarity initiatives (e.g., Daskalaki, 2018; Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017), in the case of Phulbari resistance, I find significant levels of negative emotional reactions such as distrust and anger that shaped the protests. For example, from my conversation with the mother of a lost child, I know that she is still grieving. As I was talking with her, I sensed that she did not know how to express her anger. She spoke little with me, and her deep sorrow was present throughout in her strong, dry face. Her loss is irrecoverable by words or expression of anger. I argue that the deep anger and sorrows create an emotional state that can fuel sensitive violence. In contrast to insensitive violence, I define sensitive violence as those acts that are committed by marginalized groups as self-defense or to protect themselves from both actual and potential violence. Zizek (2008) may interpret sensitive violence as revolutionary violence; however, I do not consider this the case as it is not implied that marginalized groups always turn to violence to overthrow a system. This also does not mean

that marginalized groups believe in violence as part of their way of life. Rather, sensitive violence is committed when all the alternative peaceful options run out.

In the Phulbari context, sensitive violence occurred when, for instance, villagers set fire to the houses of Asia Energy agents (who villagers deemed as 'collaborators'), in the aftermath of the killings of the three activists. The villagers once also attacked the vehicle of the Asia Energy chief executive as a protest. Such violence took place when emotions ran high among villagers. Thus, I see such violence as resistance (c.f., Thoreau's (1860) argument on resistance is self-defense and a duty of any citizen); it simply broke out because the villagers felt extreme hopelessness about their vulnerable situation and tried to resist Asia Energy using their available means. It is worth mentioning that such vulnerability is still felt, as Asia Energy has two non-functional offices in Phulbari through which it maintains a symbolic presence in the locality, thus continually inflicting mental wounds.

Essentially, in such contexts, it is important for marginalized groups to sustain their localized emotional structure to practice freedom and choice. This is because marginalized groups do not simply want to be considered reactionary. Rather, marginalized groups want to portray that they have the capacity to think rationally and defend their rights by retaining/maintaining their shared emotions. From this perspective, maintenance of localized emotional structure influences powerful actors to recognize and accept the terms of marginalized groups. This is possible because such emotional structures encapsulate localized knowledge and capability to challenge the dominant institutions (e.g., economic or human development agenda of powerful actors) and have the desire or passion to exert continuous pressure on powerful actors. The implication is that localized emotional structure naturally facilities the periodic usage of sensitive violence as shared emotions of marginalized groups, where marginalized people are

not obliged to embrace the (rational) wishes or complicities of powerful actors. For better illustration of this argument, I consider the case of the Sentinelese tribe on a remote Indian island called North Sentinelese Island. In 2018, Sentinelese killed an American tourist when he entered into this highly restricted part of the world to spread religion (Safi, 2018). In the aftermath of the killing of this tourist and others, the Indian government is unwilling to enforce its laws against this tribe. They have a common understanding that the territories of the Sentinelese would not be disrupted, but if so, as a defense, tribe members would harm outsiders to protect themselves (Natarajan, 2018). This does not mean that tribe members harm outsiders because they enjoy violence; rather, they do so as they lack prior information of unknown and unwanted people who could invade their territory. From this perspective, the Indian government, tourist agencies, and even tourists themselves have an obligation to respect the privacy and rights of tribes (Hutcheson, 1969). If not, it is obvious that a sensitive violence is likely to occur, given that a localized emotional structure evolved there over time. In any case, this type of intrusion essentially destroys the long-term harmony and peace of marginalized groups because they need to remain alert to protect themselves and thus may become involved in further unnecessary violent acts to ensure they maintain their way of life.

Discussion and conclusions

I argue that although they differ in their interpretation and conceptualization of violence, Butler (2004), van der Linden (2012) and Zizek (2008) underestimate certain elements of subjective violence, such as emotional wounds, which are not only significantly harmful to the recipient community but may also perpetuate systemic violence in response. My analysis essentially highlights the need for more research on insensitive violence because one must not underplay the

fact that systemic violence receives more focus. For example, van der Linden (2012) defines income inequality as a form of systemic violence, which receives significant attention as it poses a grand challenge for our societies (for example, see the recent works of Riaz, (2015), Riaz et al. (2016) and Śliwa (2007)).

Further, I argue that when insensitive violence occurs, although emotional wounds are not immediately visible, they have devastating effects on victims, their families and whole societies over time and the pain of these wounds can even be transferred from one generation to another. Such invisible marks then change the characteristics of the local cultures, customs and norms, or even the behavior of the local population. For example, the identity of certain populations is easily affected as people with wounds find themselves in a new reality, which influences them to adopt alternative strategies to cope with their daily lives and with external threats or opportunities. It also means that such wounds easily destroy the harmony and trust relationships among community members, leaving them constantly worried about potential threats. Sadly, the effects of insensitive violence not only possess limited traceability, but are also difficult to detect because of its invisible consequences. Only retrospectively might it be possible to explain the effects of such violence.

From the above perspective, discussion of aspects of shared emotions such as pain, fear, worry, happiness, sorrow and mental peace is extremely important in management research as, for instance, compensation for land is not enough to induce those in a community to sell their properties to firms. It is not enough to build infrastructure such as schools and hospitals or to promise health, prosperity and democracy. However, the neoclassical management approach or instrumental stakeholder theory (e.g., Henisz et al., 2014; Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004) does not consider such emotional elements as a vital factor of stakeholder engagement. Instead, it argues

that the trickle-down effects of development afford magic solutions to all our wicked problems including human misery. However, as soon as we see things from the perspective of marginalized groups, we end up with a very different conclusion: Marginalized groups have a right to reject a way of living that they do not want even if others such as government or corporate officials think that their (the group's) existing way of life is not worthy.

Asia Energy is still desperate to acquire the land of the traditional community (see Manik, 2017). Recently, the firm signed a memorandum of understanding with PowerChina to increase its chance to access Phulbari mining site (see GCM Resources, 2018). Such news intensifies the emotional wounds of the Phulbari people as the fear of more violence increases. Unfortunately, this is a unique situation where so violently are the wishes of the Phulbari people denied and the people humiliated, despite a more than a decade long resistance. Collaboration with PowerChina is more like a double scapegoating (Gabriel, 2012) of responsibilities. The old management of Asia Energy brings a revitalized approach to justify their actions. This, however, creates missed opportunities for Asia Energy to purify their ideas and show empathies for their past mistakes and misbehaviors (c.f., Gabriel, 2012; Parker, 1983).

This raises a practical concern: *What can organizational and management scholars do about violence against marginalized groups, given that sustainability discourses and concerns about climate change are increasingly dominating our scholarly conversations*? To address such issues, there is no other alternative to bringing the perspective of marginalized groups into the strategic decision-making of firms (see also Piven, 2008). The fundamental reason is that if we want to tackle the issues of sustainability, we must not neglect the unrealized aspects such as emotional elements of freedom and choice that marginalized groups deserve to exercise. Meanwhile, critical organization scholars recognize such a need (e.g., Alvesson and Willmott,

1992; Cooke, 2003; Seremani and Clegg, 2016), we have yet to see mainstream management scholarship (see critique of Davis (2015), Miller (2007) and Mir et al. (1999)) to discuss the perspective of marginalized groups as a core factor of strategic decision-making. Henceforth, a difficult but well-needed discussion of the shared emotions of the underprivileged must not remain as *background noise* for too long, as these views cannot only improve the overall wellbeing of our societies but also protect against man-made catastrophes such as climate change. Otherwise, only powerful actors will reap the benefits of the so-called human and economic development and perpetuate environmental degradation and human misery.

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