MINING-SECTOR REFORMS IN GHANA

Institutionalizing and Legitimizing Large-Scale Land Deals and Acquisitions in Rural Communities of Western Ghana[1]

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ABSTRACT

The gold mining sub-sector is an important segment of the Ghanaian economy and has played a significant role in the country's socio-economic development since the colonial period. At a national level, gold accounts for 95% of the total minerals exported from Ghana, contributing 40% of the government's foreign exchange revenues. Over the past three decades, gold production has increased drastically, a factor linked to the legal reforms that led to growth in investor confidence and hence rapid influx of foreign mining multinational companies. The mining boom that ensued ushered Ghana into the elite group of the world's gold producing countries, while at the local level, it destroyed the rural livelihoods of communities who depended on land for the food production and income generation. Large-scale acquisition of land remains a key threat to food security and livelihoods safety in most mining areas of the country. Academic studies have focused largely on assessing the socio-ecological impacts of mining in these areas. While that is useful, scholarship has to a large extent shied away from the more 'political' and sensitive aspects of how these land deals and acquisitions are negotiated, legitimized and institutionalized. In this paper, I make an attempt to unravel the 'hidden' power-spaces that underpin these land deals and provide some plausible arguments of how they are legitimized. Borrowing heavily from 3 years of my PhD research in Tarkwa, I will discuss the pre- and post-independent reform processes, examining the key turning points that currently determine decision making over land resources in Western Ghana.

[1] This paper is an excerpt from my PhD research work conducted in Ghana (2007-2009) and published as Chapter 1 in the book, ‚Gold Mining in Ghana – ‚Actors, Alliances and Power' (Tsuma, 2010)

1 INTRODUCTION

> *'(1) Every mineral in its natural state in, under or upon land in Ghana, rivers, streams, water courses throughout the country, the exclusive economic zone and an area covered by the territorial sea or the continental shelf is the property of the Republic and is vested in the President in trust for the People of Ghana'… (2) Where land is required to secure the development or utilization of a mineral resource, the president may acquire the land or authorize its occupation and use under an applicable enactment of the time being in force (Compulsory acquisition of Land)* (Minerals and Mining Act, 2006: Act 703)

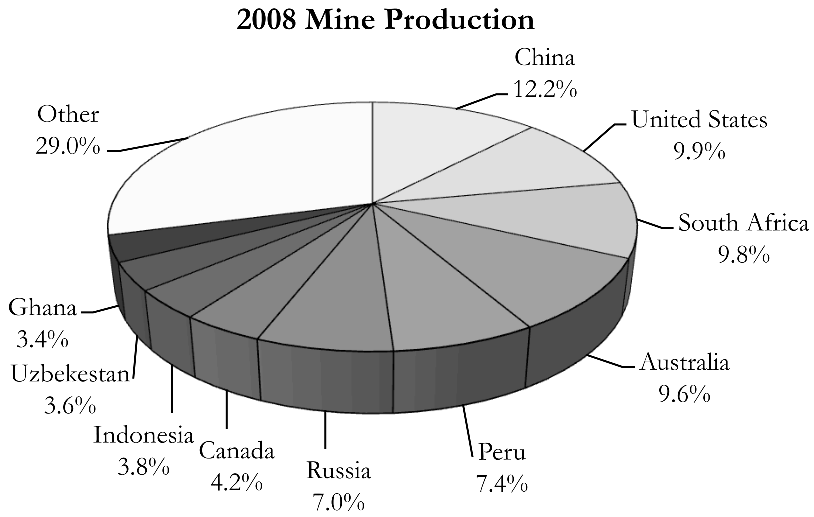
The gold mining sub-sector is an important segment of the Ghanaian economy and has played a significant role in the country's socioeconomic development since the colonial period (Akabzaa, 2008:1). At a national level, gold accounts for close to 95% of the total minerals exported from Ghana, contributing 40% of the government's foreign exchange revenues (Minerals Commission, 2007). Over the past three decades, gold production in Ghana has increased drastically, a factor linked to the legal reforms that led to increased foreign investments and an influx of mining multinationals into the sector (Akabzaa and Darimani, 2001).

The mining boom that ensued ushered Ghana into the elite group of the world's gold producing countries (see Diagram 1:1 below). In the rural areas however, the livelihoods that heavily depend on stable land system for food production and income generation has been greatly destroyed. This is because mining investments are by *default* situated in rural areas where inhabitants depend on a healthy land system for their livelihoods and income generation activities. Volker et al, (2006) refers to the *default* location of mines as the greatest dilemma facing policy makers in mining countries of the developing South. The dilemma is compounded by the fact that land acquisition deals continue to be negotiated on a regular basis. As these are being negotiated, rural areas characterized by hilly-forested areas fertile lands and well fed with reliable land for food production and sustainable livelihoods are being *grabbed* for surface mines. As this happens, communities are forced to abandon farm-based activities, which brings along unprecedented consequences. An example of these consequences is the rising prices of food in mining areas a result food prices and collapse of farm-based economic livelihoods activities as local communities target to tap into the *'unfulfilling'* goodies of the mining investments.

Having said that, land acquisitions deals for mining investments in developing countries are on the increase. The *default* location of the reserves provides part of the story, but leaves a larger chunk of unknowns in as far as how these land deals are negotiated, institutionalized and structured. I do hold the view that land acquisition deals as negotiated in mining countries of the developing south are institutionalized within legal spaces of decision-making. It is within these spaces that the *legal license* of mining is acquired and which provides the framework for rural land governance and control. At the local level, the 'institutionalized' deals embedded in mining contracts are further negotiated and legitimized through the *capture* of local mechanisms and custodians of local resources. This complex process cannot be fully captured within the scope of this paper, but provides for an interesting analysis in a separate volume. What I set out to do is provide a background analysis of the legal spaces within mining sector in Ghana has evolved. In my analysis, you will find that I take a biased position towards the control and capture of rural mining areas as the main focus of mining sector reforms.

As I do so, I also provide an anecdote to the fact that mining investments fully depend on available land reserves on which mines are extracted and mining activities developed respectively, as well as the labor that performs the actual extraction and processing. Any reform process therefore in my opinion was geared towards streamlining these two very important resources. To start of, I discuss the historical perspectives and legal reforms[2] that have preceded the current mining sector in Ghana and analyze how these reforms have shaped the patterns of local level decision making and most importantly the governance of important resources like land. A key outcome and which forms the gist of this analysis is that each reform era coincided with loss of land for community members, control and displacement of labor, capture of local decision making power and lastly a boom in mineral production.

Diagram 1-1: Top 10 Leading Producers of Gold in the World



Source: Gold Sheet International, 2008

2 GHANA'S MINING-SECTOR REFORM

As intimated in the introduction, historical analysis of the legal spaces in my opinion provides a lens within which we can best understand the current land-acquisition deals in Ghana's mining sector. The quotations are provide at the beginning of this text reflect the *embeddedness* of land deals in legal reforms and the promulgation of legislation that provides the basis for external access, control and ownership of traditional/family farm lands in mining areas. In this paper, I will discuss 3 main reform periods - pre-independence, post independence and the Post SAP eras embraced at the national level yet greatly shaped resource governance patterns in rural mining areas.

[2] In the literature, these reforms are well documented and presented in as far their impact on the national trends of gold production is concerned (see, Jonah, 1987; Coakley, 1999; World Bank 1999, Aryee, 2000; ECA 2002; Akabzaa, 2000; Akabzaa and Darimani, 2001). This paper does not duplicate these efforts, rather compliments by discussing local social-political changes that have been brought about by these reforms and how they shape patterns and practices of decision-making, resource governance and control in mining areas

2.1 Pre-Independence Reforms to 1956: *Centralized Control*

Ghana's mining history dates back to the 12thc, hence its name, the Gold Coast of Africa. Mining operations along the coast were undertaken through underground shafts and gold was amalgamated using mercury (Dummet, 1980). By the time the colonialists arrived to the Gold Coast, Ghanaian mining regions, especially the Ashanti and the Western regions, had established 'golden' empires built upon gold exchange, trade networks and partnerships with neighboring merchants from the Ivory Coast and other African and Arabian countries (Terray, 1974)[3]. At the heart of resource exchange and control were chiefs and kings who acted as custodians for local resources. They were very influential, controlled the people as well as acting as caretakers of the gold-rich land.

These traditional rulers played a vital role as custodians of rural resources and labor, based on the mandate they had to control and rule. At that time, labor was communally organized, which meant families contributed to the labor needs of each mining season. Mining was largely rudimentary and in large-scale investments like the Ashanti kingdoms, it was predominantly through underground shafts. Underground mines protect the top-layer surface of soils, creates employment to many and reduces the amount of land destroyed under mining. Like any extractive investment, underground shafts come with social, ecological impacts, but their scope is limited as compared to large-scale surface mines. During these pre-colonial days, family farmlands were seldom allocated for mining, irrespective of what geological surveys revealed about the specific lands. Chiefs and other traditional rulers had the responsibility of ensuring that food production patterns of their subjects are protected and in cases where land had to be acquired, proper in-depth negotiations at all levels of decision making took place According to Dummet (1980), the process of allocating local resources for mining in pre-independence Ghana was well systematized in a manner to ensure sustainability of the *subjects* in as far as their livelihoods are concerned.

The arrival of the colonialists on the Gold Coast signaled the beginning of the battle to gain control over these mineral-rich areas. For the colonial government, gaining control of mining areas first meant gaining control of mineral-rich land, weakening the control of chiefs and finally capturing the labor market (Terray, 1974). A key strategy in how this was done was through the promulgation of the Mercury Ordinance of 1933.Through this legislation; the use of mercury by African miners was regarded illegal. The promulgation of the Mercury Law began the process of criminalization of the African miner. With use of mercury banned, African mining operations were impaired and cracks began to appear in what had been a solid and balanced system of gold production and trade. The Ghanaian African mining sector could not meet the demands of the trader partners in the Ivory Coast for example, and the African middlemen who relied on commissions for exchange were also getting restless. Without mining, the chiefs did not have the same influence and control over their subjects, because they did not have leverage in terms of labor demands any more. With local communities banned from mining, the value of land declined in their sight as colonial regimes gained fully control of rural areas. The promulgation of this law coincided with the establishment of a governor's general office in Takuradi in Western Ghana.

Of course, arguments still abound as to whether the Mercury Ordinance Law indeed weakened the social structure shaped around chiefs in gold mining areas of Ghana. Terray (1974) holds the view that this reform process weakened the chiefs because they lost control over the mineral-rich-lands as well as influence over the subjects who became slaves working on colonial mines. He posits further that chiefs were weakened because of the cracks that emerged within the institution of chiefs and their kingdoms due to the divide and rule approach adopted by the colonial regime. Some of the chiefs were co-opted by the colonial government into its local administration, though this was to ensure continued support and cordial relations with the local communities. The divide and rule strategy complimented the indirect approach adopted by the British colonial government, as perceived by Terray who

[3] The majority of the early traders on the Gold Coast included the British, Portuguese and Arabs who established contacts with middle-men and the kings of Ashanti for gold (see Dummet, 1980)

argued that traditional solidarity was weakened as local decision makers were captured in the process. In some cases, this exposed the communities to slavery and also weakened their ability to effectively resist colonial acquisition of their land. By co-opting chiefs through indirect rule, the British gained total access to land and also labor for their mining investments. Sara Berry states that, the institution of chiefs might have been weakened, but those chiefs who were co-opted into the colonial administration enjoyed a reasonable amount of power and went on to play a key role in making land resources easily accessible to the colonialists.

The 'rhetoric' behind the mercury ordinance was the notion that mercury was dangerous for mining and that African miners lacked the capacity to effectively manage the risks that mercury caused to their health and the environment. When analyzing the evolution and implementation of the law, one is able to plausibly argue that the Mercury ordinance was loaded with *hidden transcripts* geared towards destabilizing the local structures that govern land resources and also labor in rural mining areas of the Gold Coast. With the traditional African structure weakened, the political arm of the colonial government created opportunities for British mining companies into the local scene. Akabzaa (2007) argues that at this time or prior the promulgation of the law, British mining[4] companies at home had already formed a significant pressure group to try influence both the Colonial Office in London and the governor in Ghana to enact the Mercury Law and create opportunities for their entry into the colony. Because of this pressure from home, the colonial regime was forced to facilitate an influx of British mining operations into the mining territories to ensure self-sufficiency of the British Empire (Akabzaa, 2007: 22).

2.2 Independence Reforms to SAP Era: *Nationalisation Agenda*

Having discussed the impact of the colonial reforms it becomes vital to investigate how the post-independent state interacted with the local mining scene in Ghana. Like the colonial government, the post-independent government also engaged in a battle of controlling local resources. Despite the presence of colonialists, the co-opted chiefs still enjoyed considerable control of local resources and their influence, as argued by Dummet and Berry, had not fully diminished. The process of the post-independent Ghana assuming total sovereignty and control over its borders and natural resources also involved a battle with the local custodians of rural resources. The post-independent state termed the period between 1957-1986 a vital one in as far as *nationalization* of *mineraled* areas was concerned. The first priority was to renegotiate existing mining arrangements and create state enterprises and numerous commodity producer associations to oversee the management of mines and mining operations (Akabzaa and Darimani, 2001: 45). A visible outcome of this nationalization process was the formation of the State Gold Mining Corporation (SGMC) in 1961. SGMC immediately assumed ownership and management of the main gold deposits and mining plants in Bibiani, Tarkwa, Prestea, Konongo, Obuasi and Dunkwa from British companies. Having acquired all the mines from the colonial regime, the next challenge was how to centralize these resources under the one administration. Centralizing decision-making power within the context of Ghana implied gaining access to the most coveted natural resource – Land.

Prior to diving into the centralization discussion, it is important to mention that at this stage the *rhetoric* behind government engagement was to generate income for re-building and maintaining the newly independent state and create employment for the Ghanaian population. Thus, state mines were subject to government intervention for purposes often unrelated to efficiency or economic probity (Akabzaa, 2007; 34). To achieve this, the government had to account for all its mines through a common centralized mechanism. So as with the colonial regime, the post–independence government had to deal with the issue of

[4] Although a concession for mining bauxite in the Awaso area was obtained in 1926, production only started in 1940-41. This was when other sources of bauxite were cut off from the Allied forces in the early part of World War II. British Aluminium Company Limited, acting as agents for the British Ministry of Aircraft Production, started exploitation of the Ayawaso deposit. Similarly, exploitation of manganese in Ghana started in 1916 at the request of the Wartime Ministry of Munitions, as manganese was in high demand for war purposes (Akabzaa, 2007: 22)

overcoming the influence and dominion of chiefs in rural mining areas. As discussed in section 2.1, by the time the colonialists were leaving Ghana, rural areas largely remained under the dominion of traditional chiefs (Dummet, 1980), who in contrast to what many thought, still assumed a lot of control and power. The power by the chiefs, especially in strategic areas like mining villages, provided a key threat to the post independent government driven by an overall goal of centralizing decision-making and gaining total hegemony over valuable land resources and people. The post-independent government also needed to establish a strong presence in rural resources and gain recognition among the electorate for individual political mileage during elections.

Strategically, the post-independent state embraced the colonial mining legislation in which all mineral-rich-lands had been vested in the hands of the governor. This was reviewed to read president. This meant that the President, as the nation's chief executive, had total dominion over mineral-rich-lands and the power to acquire such land, as he would deem fit. From a local perspective, this reform process had a direct impact on the decision-making structures at a local level. This is because land, just like in the colonial times, was vested in the hands of the chiefs and decisions on how it was used depended largely on the subjects and the chieftaincy hierarchy. The chiefs therefore amassed power and commanded influence on the richness of the land they controlled on behalf of their subjects. This was therefore bound to change, as the President was now to assume the custodian's role. The formation of SMGC in 1961 was a further confirmation of the Government's intentions as this new structure was to then play a central role in the extraction of minerals and collection of revenues in mining areas.

Like Dummet, Berry (2002) argues that this reform, just like the Mercury Ordinance of 1943, was pretty much Nkrumah's tactic to alienate and weaken traditional systems and in doing so gain control and dominion over the mineral rich lands in Ghana's mining areas. She argues further this approach was seldom used in other non-mining regions of the country. Off course, this does not mean that he was doing away with the chiefs totally. In fact, there was evidence to show that Nkrumah attempted to sow seeds of division among the chieftaincy by trying to co-opt them into his local government machinery. Just like the colonial regime, he needed the popular support of his people and one way of doing this was to establish 'strategic' partnerships with some of the key chiefs.

This era of state-owned mining was however plagued with, or constrained by, lack of investment and exploration. The state-owned mining enterprises were under-capitalized and became increasingly obsolescent. Lack of investment, maintenance and modernization left these state-run mines uncompetitive. The SGMC was operating at a loss and had to close the Bibiani and Konongo mines. In terms of productivity, the state-led interventions were operating at a loss, which also coincided with a declining national economy in Ghana, like in many African countries. Like the colonial attempts, Nkrumah's government had for that short time sowed seeds of confusion within the local governance structures and by introducing SGMC; the local communities did not have access to their land as they previously did. In addition the influence and control of chiefs had been arguably compromised, creating a power vacuum in terms of who controlled the available land resources and the wealth that lied underneath.

2.3 SAPs & Related Mining Sector Reforms: *External Control*

At this point, SGMC was already up for sale and most of its operations had been closed. The mining sector, which had accounted for close to 24% of Ghana's exports at independence now accounted for only 15% in 1978. From production peaks in the 1960s, gold output fell to 5.97 million oz in the 1970s and even further in the 1980s to only 3 million oz. Other minerals suffered a similar decline. This was one of the main reasons for the declining availability of foreign exchange during the latter period (Akabzaa, 2009:23). The stagnation was worsened by the economic recession that crippled a larger section of African countries in the 70's and early 80's. By 1985, there were no significant investments in Ghana's gold mining sub-sector. Output in almost all the mines declined and the sector contributed relatively little to gross national earnings. As a result, this era saw a new wave of reforms, this time pushed by the Breton woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The World Bank took special interest in the mining sector and argued that it provided a viable vehicle for economic recovery in African mining countries. In Ghana, the collapse of the mining sector was linked it to the failure of the post-independent state to adequately attract sufficient funds to manage the mines, low technology and skills, and a declining grade of gold ore. The Structural Adjustment Report of 1984 for example stated that the mining sector crumpled due to: "lack of foreign exchange to maintain and rehabilitate the mines; lack of capital investment for mining skills; infrastructure deterioration, particularly shortages of rail capacity for manganese and bauxite; mining company financial problems due to the greatly over-valued currency and spiraling inflation; a declining grade of gold ore; the exhaustion of high grade manganese ore; the depletion of the more lucrative diamond mines in many areas; high absenteeism and low worker discipline; and pilfering, illegal panning and smuggling of gold and diamonds" (World Bank 1992:34).

An important policy outcome from these reforms was the disengagement of the government from the management, direct control and ownership of the mining industry as a whole. This took immediate effect as foreign investors acquired a majority of the nationally owned mines. Acquiring mines also meant gaining access to the lands under concession, an aspect that isolated local communities further from decisions around their land. The government relinquished its role as owner of the mines, by systematically selling its shares in these mines to foreign private sector. The largest of these companies was the Anglo Gold Ashanti and Tarkwa mines which the government fully sold off in 1993 and 1995 respectively. Before then, both had been under receivership by Anglo Gold (present day Anglo Gold Ashanti) and Gold Fields Ghana, both South African mining giants. Like in the two reforms discussed above, this reform process also sought to destabilize the decision-making and resource governance mechanisms in rural mining areas. This time it was the state that was displaced.

Changes at national level trickled to the local level with massive changes in the social-political and economic structure of rural mining communities. First, the influx of foreign multinationals armed with mining contracts meant that they gained access to community land and had decision - making power, which was vested in the government after independence. While the government owned mines practiced underground mining, SAP era mining practices involved large-scale extraction of land through the more resource-intensive. Large-scale mines require vast amounts of land for establishing mining plants and putting in place all the supporting sectors. The government had to give mining multinationals concessions and most of them revolved around allocating land. In the current Minerals and Mining Act (2006), there is a section titled compulsory acquisition of land, which is also quoted in my introduction. This act gives the president to right to 'compulsorily' acquire any piece of land deemed viable for mining investments. This land is contracted to mining company who enjoys the rights to use and own this land within the terms and duration of the mining contract. The consequence is increased land related conflicts with local communities and also reduction of land available for other activities other than farming.

Like in the other reform processes, the SAP era brought into fore a new power balance in mining areas, with mining multinationals assuming a more influential role in the governance of rural resources in mining areas. While traditionally the chiefs played a central role in managing village farm lands for example, the influx of multinationals and their large-scale demand for land alienated the chief as the former took a central stage in negotiating relocation and resettlement plans for affected communities. With this in mind, local communities did not have a say on decisions involving their land. Shifts from the post-colonial underground shafts to the more resource intensive surface mines meant that community displacement was going to an inevitable and regular occurrence. At this stage, negotiations over acquisition of land fell in the domain of the government and the investment companies, with the local communities and their traditional custodians relegated to the periphery.

Another aspect of the SAP era reforms was that is that it created spaces for new technologies, which brought along a new social inter-action in rural mining areas. How is this related to land acquisition, one might ask? The new technologies that were introduced by mining multinationals with a goal of increasing production of minerals for profit maximization (see Aryee, 2004; Ghana Chamber of Mines, 2003; Minerals Commission, 2007) contributed to increased demand for mining land. New mining methods and technologies meant a growing demand for new skills as well as personnel. For example, the introduction of cyanide heap-leach and bio-oxidation, which made the processing of low-grade material viable, demanded extra allocation of land for establishing leaching pads, tailings dams, cyanide storage ponds among others. In addition, new crop of highly qualified and technically skilled personnel was needed in the mines (Akabzaa and Darimani, 2001), which meant the need for staff housing and other mining related facilities. The expansion of mines and related activities all came at a cost to the rural communities who had to sacrifice their land to accommodate the new *tenant*. By the time I was completing my fieldwork in Ghana, Gold Ghana Limited alone had constructed close to 34, 4-bedroom bungalows for its management staff within the mining concession. With each house on a compound, it is argued a unit of bungalows could well occupy half an acre to one acre of land. Besides the management staff who resided within the mines, there was also a high in-flux of prospective or potential skilled laborers seeking to fill the jobs created by the surface mines in Western Ghana (Akabzaa, 2000). Land for real estate construction and rental became a booming business as local business elite took advantage of the boom to make quick many. The resulting effect was increase in housing costs especially for the urban dwellers and also stiff competition for family lands as prospective migrant communities colluded with chiefs to lease large sections of available land (WACAM, 2004). The problem in such cases was compounded by the fact that land resources were nolonger as abundant as before because of the more resource – intensive surface mines. Because of high wages and the lucrative nature of mining, agriculture as a mode of food and income generation became redundant and those who could not be accommodated in the formal mining sector engaged embraced the illegal *galamsey* operations as an alternative.

3 Reforms and Gold Production

A central observation from existing literature, government statistics and field experiences is that the above reforms did achieve positive results with respect to investor perception of the investment environment in Ghana and the volume and value of mineral output (World Bank, 2002). The country fast became a citadel of commerce and mining in West Africa. Internationally, Ghana is known now to be among a few selected African countries with the most attractive geological and investment environment. Comparative geological ranking of African countries placed Ghana second after South Africa and 10th in the whole world (Akabzaa, 2008:19; Gold Sheet International, 2007). The commercial, legal and political risk assessment by the World Bank (2002) was categorized as being good enough for large-scale investment alongside Botswana, Tanzania, Morocco and South Africa. A separate survey by the International Investment Conference indicated that the country had moved from 7th position in 1992 to 4th in 2002 on the list of emerging markets in Africa, with the explosion of local and foreign mining in the country an indicator of the success. In terms of actual statistics, there has been a fast growth of the mining sector and especially in terms of gold production and its contribution to government income (see table 1-2 below).

Table 1-1: **Gold Mining Sector Performance (1986-2007)**

Exports	Gold (US$)	Total Minerals Export (US$)	Total Exports (US$)	Minerals as % of Exports	Gold as % of Total Exports	Gold as % of all Mineral Exports
1984	103.3	115.3	567.0	20.34	18.22	89.59
1990	201.6	242.3	896.7	27.5	22.48	83.20
1995	647.3	678.9	1431.2	47.44	45.23	95.35
2000	702.0	756.0	1936.3	39.40	36.26	92.87
2001	617.8	691.4	1867.1	37.30	33.09	89.36
2002	689.1	753.9	2015.2	37.41	34.19	91.40
2003	803.1	893.6	2602.6	34.33	31.90	92.90
2004	840.2	880.0	2739.2	32.10	30.7	95.50
2005	945.8	995.2	2836.2	35.10	33.30	95.0
2006	1277.25	1371.7	3726.7	36.80	34.30	93.1
2007	1733.80	1815.40	4194.7	43.30	41.30	95.5

Source: Akabzaa, 2009; Minerals Commission, 2007

REFORMS: *At a glance*

By analyzing the *hidden transcripts* of these reforms, I do observe there is a primary interest of reform drivers to satisfy the demand by the global gold market, but not necessarily the societal and environmental concerns of local communities (Akabzaa, 2009; Coakley, 1999). It is possible to observe the rapid changes in the local dynamics of resource governance and the emergence of new societal actors, all seeking to establish control structures in rural mining areas. Once the local systems of resource governance are compromised in a *legal* manner, then a vacuum for external control is created within land deals are negotiated, structured and legitimized. This can be observed as a common storyline in all the reform processes discussed above.

At a glance, this paper seeks to illustrate that mining sector reforms were not interest-free or neutral in Ghana. They were and are guided by well-defined *rhetoric,* but loaded with *hidden* agenda in terms of the interests they represent. A common denominator is that they all targeted rural mining areas and whatever the justification, they were geared towards re-shaping the control of rural resources in rural mining areas. If it was not the colonial government trying to centralize and capture local resources for British market abroad, it was the post-independence government seeking to gain political hegemony through establishing control instruments in the form of government bodies in these areas. The encroachment of multinationals into rural areas is no lesser evil as decisions over land acquisition are left to outsiders and those with who the legal license is bestowed. All these processes have taken place and been legitimized within legal reforms that protects the actions of each actor in power. In this case, none of the land deals can be regarded as illegal, rather institutionalized.

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