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# **Resources, Conflict and Governance: a critical review of the evidence**

**Jeroen Cuvelier (Conflict Research Group,  
University of Ghent)**

**Koen Vlassenroot (Conflict Research Group,  
University of Ghent)**

**Nathaniel Olin (University of Wisconsin-  
Madison)**

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The Editor, Justice and Security Research Programme, International  
Development Department, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE

Or by email to: [Intdev.jsrp@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Intdev.jsrp@lse.ac.uk)

## Abstract

*What are the links between natural resources and violent conflict? How do formal, informal, and 'hybrid' governance arrangements shape those links? What is the impact on the position of conflict-affected populations of these arrangements? This paper conducts a systematic review of the evidence base of peer-reviewed and 'grey' literature on resource governance in conflict-affected areas. It finds limited consensus on how to approach and conceptualise resource-related issues in conflict-affected areas. Many of the existing theories rely on normative assumptions and lack empirical support. Three areas are highlighted as demanding further research: hybrid resource governance, rebel resource governance, and the position and strategies of conflict-affected populations.*

## Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a growing preoccupation with the quality of the evidence base of research in social sciences. Social scientists have come under increasing pressure to be more transparent about their ways of data collection and analysis, to demonstrate the empirical groundedness of their theoretical and observational statements, and to ensure the verifiability of their research findings (Young et al. 2002; Solesbury 2001). This rising pressure can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the growing political interference with science and the concomitant demand for 'useful' research (Lather 2004), the influence of evidence-based medicine which arrived in the beginning of the 1990s (Guyat et al. 1992; Davies et al. 2000), the 'publish or perish' ethos and the increasing importance of publishing in peer-reviewed journals with strict scientific standards (Smeyers & Burbules 2011) and finally the growing interest in, and acknowledgement of, the value of previous research and existing data (Solesbury 2001).

While we recognise the dangers associated with the uncritical adoption of an evidence-based approach (e.g. positivism; an unwarranted belief in the existence of objective scientific knowledge; lack of attention to the politics of research and to the complexity of the relationship between knowledge and power; an exaggerated confidence in the measurability of scientific quality etc., (see Hammersley 2005; Marston & Watts 2003), a systematic literature review of the type designed, applied and promoted by scholars working in the evidence-based paradigm has several merits. Apart from the fact that it forces one to systematically collect all available literature on a given topic and to assess its value according to a fixed procedure and a set of clearly defined criteria, it also allows policy-oriented researchers to identify and question the scientific assumptions underlying certain policy interventions. In other words, a systematic literature review can be an excellent tool for a kind of reality check – to find out whether, from a social scientific point of view, policymakers are (still) addressing the most important and appropriate issues, and whether the efficiency and effectiveness of their initiatives are being jeopardised by the fact that they are based on erroneous ideas or questionable scientific findings.

This paper aims to contribute to such an evidence-based approach and present a systematic review of the literature on the assumed links between resources, conflict and governance. Conflicts such as the wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have raised growing concerns that natural resources such as diamonds, oil, gold, tantalum, tin and tungsten either cause conflict or shape the strategies of armed actors. These

concerns have encouraged policymakers to design new frameworks of intervention, aimed at cutting the assumed links between armed groups and resources and at promoting transparent models of resource governance. However, these interventions often rely on unsupported assumptions regarding the role of natural resources in the motivations of combatants and the dynamics of conflict. Moreover, interventions rarely consider the populations in conflict-affected regions, who play an integral role in these dynamics.

This paper will assess the quality of the evidence used to analyse the links between resources and violent conflict, as well as the determinants of resource governance in conflict-affected regions. We are motivated by the following question: *what is the quality of information that is used to analyse the different ways resource governance affects people in fragile and conflict-affected areas?* More specifically, we want to know: (i) *the quality of information that supports the dominant arguments on the links between natural resources and conflict;* and (ii) *the quality of information on hybrid arrangements which define access to and control over natural resources in conflict-affected areas.*

In order to answer these questions conclusively, we conduct a critical review and synthesis of the existing information and quality of evidence in peer-reviewed literature and influential research reports on resource governance in conflict-affected and fragile areas. We have decided to use 1990 as a cut-off year because it is widely acknowledged in the literature that the end of the Cold War and economic globalisation have had a significant impact on warfare throughout the world (Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2001) and have contributed to the growing importance of natural resources as causes or drivers of violent conflicts (Berdal 2003). We are specifically concerned with literature that addresses the experiences and perspectives of conflict-affected populations. We concentrate on non-renewable lootable and/or tradable natural resources, including oil.<sup>1</sup>

The next sections of the paper summarise the systematic literature review beginning with an outline of the search strategy, methodology, and data extraction strategy and then engaging critically with the surveyed literature. The authors summarise the key arguments, assess the quality of the evidence, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the available information under the following themes: (i) natural resource abundance and the ‘resource curse’; (ii) greed as an explanatory factor of armed struggle; (iii) war economies, criminality and rebel governance; (iv) hybrid (resource) governance arrangements, particularly in borderlands; and (v) resource governance in post-conflict reconstruction. A final, concluding section identifies the gaps in the evidence and suggests elements for a future research agenda on resource governance in conflict-affected areas.

## Methodology

### *Systematic literature searches*

The systematic selection of relevant studies was defined by several inclusion criteria. We

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<sup>1</sup> These resources have taken centre stage in the literature on resource abundance and conflict, while the assumed struggle for control over these resources has inspired a broad spectrum of policy responses. Existing literature and policy responses have paid the most attention to diffuse resources, i.e. those “spatially spread over vast areas and often exploited by less capital-intensive industries” (Le Billon 2004: 8), but point resources (i.e. those “spatially concentrated in small areas (which), can be exploited by capital-intensive extractive industries”, Le Billon, 2004: 8) will be part of our review as well. Other natural resources such as water and land have received increased attention from scholars and policymakers, but will not be included. Nor will the literature on resource scarcity and pastoralism be integrated into our assessment.

reviewed research conducted in the following countries and regions: Central Africa (DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Central African Republic, Kenya, Angola), the Sahel (Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Chad), the Caucasus, and Afghanistan-Pakistan. These conflict-affected regions were selected on the basis of the presence of natural resources as defined above, and the recognition that these resources have been identified as complicating factors in local conflict. We only included research that dealt with the impact of resources on conflict-affected populations or provided local-level empirical data. As our search was mainly based on English-language databases most of the selected literature was in English. However, additional searches were carried out in French, German and Dutch.

The search strategy aimed to identify existing and relevant literature in social sciences and included several steps. Search strategy 1 was a database-driven search. Several databases were identified which are commonly accepted as the most important in social sciences and provide the most extensive sets of academic and non-academic literature: Scopus, ISI Web of Science, IBSS, CIAO, EBSCO (Business Source Complete, EconLit, Historical Abstracts, International Political Science Abstract, Peace Research Abstract), CABI, Google Scholar and Worldcat. A single search string was selected and used in all the databases.<sup>2</sup> All search results were screened by title and abstract.

Although systematic, the database-driven search strategy had mixed results in terms of identifying the key literature on the subject or identifying new and influential material. A considerable number of references that were suggested by experts as essential reading were not identified through the search strategy and there was a particular bias against ethnographic work. Minor changes in the search terms or syntax also caused important variations in result numbers; the particular order of criteria led to varying outcomes and increased the risk of distortions in the final set of results. The process of fixing a single search string, although necessary for consistency, thus risked introducing arbitrary selection or limiting results.

Given these limitations, two additional strategies were used to complete our search and to ensure an accurate picture of the state of the field. Search strategy 2 was the addition of literature based on individually identified key references. This search followed the rules of a more traditional literature review, including a ‘snowball search’ through bibliographies of influential studies. This added 109 sources to the list of references. Search strategy 3 was the identification of potential studies by peers/authorities in the field. 30 peers (both researchers and practitioners) were selected and invited to identify 5 key sources, including books, articles, working papers and reports. These references were added to the results of the previous strategies. 12 experts responded and an additional 32 studies were added to the list of references.

The titles and abstracts of the final results of these search strategies were screened by the research team according to the inclusion criteria of the study. From the 412 references found, 198 studies were included in the evidence review. Table 1 summarises the number of hits from the fixed search string in the various databases and search strategies, the number of articles scanned by the researchers, and the final number of references selected for the review.

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<sup>2</sup> Hybrid\* OR institution\* OR govern AND resource AND fragile\* or conflict OR war OR border\* OR frontier\*. This search string combines the most important concepts that encompass the literature outlined above. This was further refined with a second search string of terms that refer to the “local level”: Local\*, Participatory\*, Livelihoods, Grassroots\*, Pro-poor\*, Popular\*, Subaltern\*, Citizen\*, Civilian\*, Survival\*, Coping\*, Ordinary\*, Everyday life.

**Table 1: Search Results**

	Database Used	# hits	# scanned hits	# hits selected
Search Strategy 1	Scopus	7,729	1,500	11
	ISI Web of Science	1,029	1,029	32
	IBSS	3,826	3,826	35
	CIAO	627	627	15
	EBSCO	3,381	3,381	86
	CABI	0	0	0
	Google Scholar	241,000	1,500	24
	Worldcat	964,274	1,000	3
	<i>Total of Search strategy 1</i>			206
Search Strategy 2	<i>References added</i>			109
Search Strategy 3	<i>References added</i>			32
	Grand Total:			<b>412</b>
	Final Total After Filtering Process			<b>198</b>

**Overview of the surveyed literature**

The papers identified by the search strategies were read, graded and annotated following the grading method developed by the Justice and Security Research Programme.<sup>3</sup> Most of the papers selected for review relied on qualitative methods to build their evidence base: a plurality was interview-based (57), followed by qualitative, observation-based (18), other type of data/information (19), and gathering own data (6). Only 18 references were based on quantitative methods, with 12 using existing data and 6 gathering own data. 36 papers were coded as containing less than 10% empirical data, 39 as containing between 10% and 50%, and 36 as containing over 50%.<sup>4</sup> Papers containing more than 10% empirical data were given an average score of 2.68 on data quality (SD 0.68) and 3.17 on quality of analysis (SD 0.61). Papers containing 10–50% of empirical data scored significantly lower (over half a point lower) than papers containing more than 50% empirical data. There was no statistically significant difference in scores received by papers found through the database search and those found through the peer search. The correlation coefficient between the score on the quality of the data and how insightful the paper was rated in terms of data/information is 0.42. The correlation coefficient between the score on the quality of the analysis and how insightful the paper was rated in terms of analysis is 0.51.

Most of the papers reviewed tended to be single case studies. The cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo (14) and Sierra Leone (8) were most prevalent; other case studies

<sup>3</sup> For more information on this programme, see: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/jsrp/>.

<sup>4</sup> Some papers fall into multiple categories and were counted several times.

included Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Liberia, the Balkans, Ivory Coast, and Uganda. Several papers (17) dealt with the 'greed or grievance' discussion or analysed the 'resource curse' argument. Other papers (29) focused on hybrid governance in conflict-affected areas, either theoretically or through case studies; a limited number of these references paid particular attention to resources or informal economies. Some papers (7) discussed the issue of natural resources from a borderlands perspective. A number of papers (11) addressed issues related to 'war economies', including global-local links, and shadow networks. Finally, several papers (8) dealt with the challenges of resource governance in post-conflict settings and issues of governance, development, and decentralisation, or paid particular attention to artisanal and small-scale mining.

In many cases it proved difficult to assess the methodology and thus the methods of data collection used. This is partly because in some disciplines there is no tradition of describing in detail how information is gathered and analysed. Ethnographic studies in particular were less likely to explain their research design and process and to employ non-systematic collection of data, informal discussions, and unstructured interview processes. Many qualitative studies cite interviews but do not explain how respondents were selected or fail to explain who was interviewed, when, where and how. Security issues and the need to protect respondents in conflict situations partly explain this lack of transparency. In many cases, however, little or no information is provided on how to ensure interviews were representative, or to allow for assessment of bias in research design. Lack of transparency on methodology does not necessarily indicate that no evidence base exists, but impedes assessment of the quality of the evidence.

Grading of the nature and extent of evidence was further complicated by several constraints. First, it is difficult to separate evidence from its conceptual framing. Particularly with regard to hybrid governance, new insights rely as much on the theoretical framing as on the empirical evidence. Second, in several cases 'evidence' includes citations from the author's wide research experience in the field. These references were cited as examples to illustrate theoretical points, but are not always focused on the case at hand nor can they be considered solid evidence. Other sources involved introductory articles that used empirical evidence from other articles to make theoretical points.

A substantive constraint of the databases was the limited amount of 'grey literature' such as research reports, briefing papers, advocacy documents and policy papers. Very few of these reports were found with the first search strategy. Because of a growing interest from policymakers and practitioners in resource governance in conflict-affected areas, a growing number of reports is being produced by donors, policymakers, advocacy groups, practitioners and consultants that contain valuable evidence. These reports are often considered significant by experts and contain relevant empirical evidence, but are not found in academic databases. Nevertheless, these sources include detailed accounts of resource-related aspects of conflict; resource control and management; livelihoods; and human rights violations in conflict-affected areas. These studies have also paid particular attention to the position of conflict-affected populations, in contrast to much of the academic literature. In order to include this evidence in the review, experts were invited to identify influential non-academic references. There was some hesitation to share these sources, partly because this grey literature is considered as part of the intellectual capital by researchers and thus is not easily shared.

## Assessment of the evidence base of the literature

### *Natural resource abundance and the 'resource curse'*

Since the end of the 1980s, there has been much discussion about the existence of a 'resource curse', the idea that "natural resource abundance (or at least the abundance of particular types of natural resources) increases the likelihood that countries will experience negative economic, political and social outcomes" (Rosser 2006: 7). A wide range of topics associated with this phenomenon has been studied.<sup>5</sup>

A first group of researchers has explored the relationship between natural resource abundance and poor economic performance. For instance, economists such as Sachs & Warner (1995), Auty (2001), Neumayer (2004), Atkinson and Hamilton (2003) and Lamb et al. (2009) argue that there is a negative relationship between natural resource abundance and economic growth. Part of their explanation lies in the fact that the governments of these countries fail to manage large resource revenues in a sustainable manner.

Other scholars have concentrated on the relationship between natural resource abundance and low levels of democracy. Jensen and Wantchekon (2004) argue that African resource-dependent countries such as Algeria, Nigeria, Libya, Gabon, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo tend to be more authoritarian or experience considerable problems consolidating democracy. Ross (2001) examines possible explanations for the poor performance of resource-exporting governments in terms of managing their economies. According to Ross, this may be partly due to the fact that the resource sectors in resource-dependent countries are often dominated by badly run, state-owned enterprises and that the governments of resource-dependent states seem to be incapable of enforcing property rights.

A third group of authors has illustrated the relationship between oil wealth and rent-seeking behaviour. There is a considerable body of scholarship on the phenomenon of what has been categorised as the 'rentier state', that is, "*a state that receives substantial rents from foreign individuals, concerns or governments*" (Mahdavy 1970: 428, quoted in Ross 2001: 329). Presenting findings from a comparative study on the political and economic problems of a group of developing petroleum-exporting countries (Nigeria, Iran, Algeria, Indonesia, and Venezuela), Karl (1999) argues that these countries have invariably been characterised by governments heavily dependent on oil rents, weak institutional frameworks, and economies suffering from the symptoms of the 'Dutch disease' (Karl, 1997, as discussed in Christensen 1999). Kaldor, Karl, and Said (2007) have examined the relationship between oil dependence and the likelihood of conflict, concentrating on six countries with a considerable oil wealth (Angola, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia/Chechnya). According to the authors, many oil-rich countries go through what they describe as a "rent-seeking cycle", which consists of four stages: state-building, stabilisation, predation, and state failure (Kaldor et al. 2007).

Yet, as Rosser (2006) also notes, the available evidence on the existence of a 'resource curse' is far from conclusive. First of all, it is unclear whether these studies have appropriately measured natural resource abundance. In most cases, they have measured it either in terms of the ratio of countries' natural resource exports to GDP, or the ratio of countries' natural resource exports to total exports. Authors who use different measurement strategies - for instance, indicators of resource abundance that estimate natural capital in USD per capita -

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<sup>5</sup> There is also a large body of literature on the relationship between resource scarcity and conflict which is addressed in this paper.



have found less support for the existence of a resource curse (see for instance Brunnschweiler 2008). There are also questions surrounding the proposed direct causal relationship between resource abundance and negative development outcomes such as corruption, authoritarianism, and clientelism. More research is needed to identify other possible intervening variables and to achieve a better understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying the resource curse (Rosser 2006: 10-12).

A substantial part of the literature on the resource curse is focused only at the level of the nation-state. Different regions within the same country often experience significant disparities in terms of natural resource endowments and give different results so development outcomes should also be examined at the sub-national level (Carter 2008). Also, in most cases the surveyed studies on the resource curse adopt a purely macro-level approach. Their primary goal is to examine large-scale trends at the political and economic level; they are less concerned with describing dynamics at the micro-level of society. Consequently, there is little information on how various aspects of the resource curse have affected different groups of end-users. For example, in their study on the impact of oil wealth and oil dependence on violent conflict, Basedau and Lay (2009) hypothesise that the availability of large revenues per capita from resources explains why in some cases the resource curse holds, while in others, a stabilising rentier effect can be observed (i.e. regimes buying peace by making use of revenue from abundant resources such as oil). The authors find support for their hypothesis through multivariate cross-country regressions and argue that high resource wealth per capita tends to be associated with less violence. While these findings suggest an intriguing general trend, populations affected by conflict are completely left out of the picture. By relying on resource wealth per capita, the authors also neglect differences within the population and the possible consequences for disputes at the local level.

To conclude, three main themes have dominated the literature on the resource curse: the relationship between natural resource abundance and poor economic performance; the relationship between natural resource abundance and low levels of democracy; and the relationship between oil wealth and rent-seeking behaviour. There has been criticism of the indicators used to measure natural resource abundance, of the analysis of the causal mechanisms underlying the resource curse, and of the state-centric focus of much of the literature. Limited efforts have also been made to investigate the consequences of the resource curse for different groups of people within conflict-affected populations. More research is thus needed to assess how the latter have dealt with the consequences of processes engendered (or believed to be engendered) by the resource curse, such as the weakening of resource property rights and the emergence of unstable systems of resource governance.

#### *Greed as an explanatory factor of armed struggle*

A considerable number of studies assess armed actors' rapacity or greed for natural resource revenues as a key factor in explaining the onset and persistence of armed conflict (Berdal & Malone 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2005). Collier, who is generally considered the founding father of this line of research, states that "conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance" (Collier 2000: 91). His early work, mostly co-authored with Hoeffler, develops the so-called 'opportunity hypothesis': violent insurgency occurs when there is an opportunity to loot. In his later work, Collier reformulated his model and proposed a 'feasibility hypothesis' in which rebellion occurs where it is materially feasible both from a financial and military point of view (Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner 2009, as discussed in Mildner et al. 2011: 162–163).

While highly influential and being a powerful source of inspiration to policymaking,<sup>6</sup> both the opportunity hypothesis and the feasibility hypothesis have received considerable criticism. Several critics have argued that the evidence in support of a causal relationship between civil war onset and natural resource abundance is rather meagre. In her examination of existing quantitative research on the aforementioned relationship, Riggerink (2010) observes that there is scholarly disagreement over various basic technical issues such as the choice of war database, the choice and source of control variables, the way in which natural resource abundance should be quantified, and the interpretation of observed correlations. As a result, authors using similar theoretical models and testing the same hypotheses have reached radically different conclusions. Ross (2006) argues that much of the literature on the relationship between natural resources and violent conflict has suffered from problems of measurement error, endogeneity, lack of robustness, and uncertainty about causal mechanisms. Le Billon (2004: 572; 581) criticises the same literature for failing to explain why an abundance of valuable resources is not a necessary or sufficient factor of conflict. He emphasises the need to consider the geography and political economy of different types of resources, as these characteristics have an important impact on the vulnerability of societies to armed conflict. Nathan (2005: 13) warns that arguments presented in studies of African civil wars relying on Collier and Hoeffler's model (e.g. Anyanwu 2002), should be taken with a grain of salt, since quantitative data on African states are often incomplete and of low quality.<sup>7</sup>

As is the case for the literature on the resource curse, a considerable number of papers reviewed in the systematic mapping process analyse macro-level processes rather than micro-level dynamics. This macro-oriented approach tends to result in rather unsophisticated analyses, which downplay the importance of various complex political and social processes at the grassroots level. Winslow and Woost (2004) for instance suggest that Collier's feasibility hypothesis is highly reductionist because it only concentrates on the economic considerations of belligerents:

Culture, ideology and power struggles disappear to be replaced by simple financial feasibility. Rebel leaders are reduced to a perverse form of that old staple of neoclassical economics, the rationally calculating generic man who, given enough funding and the right advertising, can manipulate almost anyone to follow any cause (Winslow and Woost 2004: 16).

Similarly, Cramer (2002) criticises rational choice theories of conflict such as Collier's for violating "the complexity of individual motivation" and for "razing the individual (and key groups) down to monolithic maximizing agents" (Cramer 2002: 1846). The 'greed' literature relies on the assumption that all rebels share the same two characteristics: they are profit-maximising individuals, and they search for power. According to the same literature, the series of grievances they cite as the official reason for their insurgency is merely to justify their actions *vis-à-vis* the international community. The validity of these assumptions is hardly demonstrated by any of the authors; it is simply taken for granted that, regardless of the societies in which they occur, civil wars are caused by the feasibility of predation (Nathan 2005: 19–21).

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<sup>6</sup> As Cramer has noted, the "greed literature" has had an important impact on policy debates, for instance through its influence on the research initiative of the World Bank on the economics of civil war, crime and violence (Cramer 2002: 1848).

<sup>7</sup> It is recognised in these studies that African governments usually lack the necessary financial and logistical means to collect accurate figures on their GDP, their population size, and other features.

In conclusion, even if the literature on economic motivations of armed actors has been very influential, the quality of the evidence advanced to prove a direct causal relationship between natural resource abundance and the onset of civil war is very limited. Also, this literature lacks attention to the implications of geographic and politico-economic features of different types of resources, and underestimates the complex political and social processes at the micro-level. In order to achieve a more profound and subtle understanding of the relationship between natural resource abundance and conflict, future research thus needs to break away from preconceived ideas about the possible motives, goals and ways of behaviour of belligerents.

### *War economies, criminality and rebel governance*

The economic motives of armed actors have not only been examined in quantitative studies supporting the 'greed argument'. A considerable number of surveyed papers focus on the economic dimensions of contemporary conflicts. Some of these papers, mostly written from a political economy perspective, investigate the relationship between economic globalisation, organised crime, and the illicit trade in natural resources. These argue that in resource-rich countries - characterised by political and economic misrule, poorly functioning governance structures, and endemic corruption - the exploitation and trade of natural resources is often controlled by transnational networks composed of state officials, army officers and/or warlords, private companies, brokers, entrepreneurs and political and economic elites. The members of these networks are seen to derive various personal benefits from their business operations in unstable environments, where they can easily bend the law to their advantage (Aning 2003; Taylor 2003; Nordstrom 2004; Silberfein 2004; Wennmann 2005; Sorensen 2006). Reno (2006: 39) points out that during the civil war in Sierra Leone, "violent political networks (...) created a social context in which key officials supported militarized clandestine commerce in natural resources". Duffield (2001) develops the concept of 'emerging political complexes' to describe how economic life in many conflict-affected areas in the Global South is dominated by privatised cross-border networks of state and non-state actors linked to the global shadow economy.

Several surveyed papers focus on the local dimension of war economies and pay particular attention to the economic agendas and strategies of armed actors. Reports by Human Rights Watch (2005) and Global Witness (2009) document in detail the role of armed groups in the exploitation and trade of natural resources in eastern DR Congo and analyse commodity chains linking local centres of resource production to global markets. While providing useful empirical evidence on local economic conditions in conflict-affected (mining) areas, these studies start from the underlying assumptions that armed groups are guided mainly by economic incentives, and that the assumed self-financing nature of conflict is leading to a mutation in the character of violence and provoking a criminalisation of warfare (Garrett et al., 2009). The same studies also neglect the complexity of war economies. One exception is Goodhand's analysis of Afghanistan's war economy, which is based on the recognition that in what is usually considered a war economy, different incentive systems need to be distinguished, as well as three types of economic interaction: a coping or survival economy, a shadow economy, and a war economy (Goodhand, 2008). Other studies tend to differentiate much less between (i) activities that relate to the production, mobilisation, and allocation of economic resources aimed at waging and sustaining war, and (ii) activities conducted outside state-regulated frameworks not intended to finance official military strategies. There is limited recognition in the surveyed literature that in conflict areas, different resource extraction scenarios may function with varying degrees of influence on conflict dynamics. Little is also known about governance and power structures defining local

conditions in conflict-affected mining zones, about the effect of armed actors' strategies on the economic position of people at the local level, or about how the latter interact with, or resist, these strategies.

Some studies analysing 'shadow networks' mainly summarise and reproduce information from open sources such as newspaper articles, internet publications, and NGO reports. Other studies provide a stronger evidence base resulting from fieldwork and interviews with different local stakeholders (i.e. the members of these networks, their beneficiaries and their victims). Scholars such as Reno (2006) and Nordstrom (2004) use various qualitative research techniques such as semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and participant observation to check and crosscheck facts and to collect solid background information on the networks they are investigating. Others are less rigorous in their methodological approach. Taylor (2003), for instance, draws most data for his article on clandestine networks in Central Africa from newspapers, UN reports, and publications of other academic scholars even though some of these sources have been heavily criticised for being biased and untrustworthy (see for instance Rubbers' (2004) critique of the UN Report on Congo of 2001). The same is true of Reyntjens (2005), who analyses the "criminalisation of public space" in Africa's Great Lakes region using evidence almost exclusively drawn from UN reports and NGO publications. While the data in these publications are not necessarily wrong, comparison with first-hand observations and interview material would allow for richer analysis and more robust conclusions.

Unlike the studies contributing to the literature on 'greed', most papers interested in the phenomenon of 'shadow networks' in fragile and conflict-affected areas include a micro-level perspective. However, many of the surveyed papers are inclined to focus attention on one specific group of actors: those involved in high-level corruption, such as government officials, army officers, rebel commanders, and powerful businessmen. The principal aim of most of these studies has been to describe the *modus operandi* of (cross-border) elite networks in resource-rich yet institutionally weak states that seek to establish a connection with the global economy through the illicit trade in natural resources. Although recent years have witnessed a growing body of literature on how ordinary people in fragile and conflict-affected areas position themselves *vis-à-vis* these networks (see for example Jackson 2002; Nordstrom 2004; Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004; Raeymaekers 2007; Ansoms and Marysse 2011), there is still a lack of clear understanding of the daily forms of interaction between network members and various groups of actors at the grassroots level.

A relatively new research theme in the literature on resources, conflict and governance is rebel governance. Several papers that were surveyed focused particularly on the governance capacities or conduct of rebel groups and militias. For other authors, rebel governance mainly concerns the rebels' extraction of resources from the population. As they argue, governance arrangements aim at streamlining this extraction (Kasfir 2005; Mampilly 2007; Weinstein 2007). Only a few studies deal directly with the subject explicitly, and are mainly limited to African cases (the exception being Sri Lanka). This results in a lack of comparative material to make conclusive statements.

Most studies on rebel governance follow qualitative methods to construct case studies, but Weinstein (2007) and Mampilly (2007) make cross-country comparisons and present some quantitative evidence. However, there is no large-N database yet allowing for cross-country quantitative comparisons. One of the main difficulties in creating such a database is in accounting for the wide variation, both in form and function, of rebel governance. While

existing case studies present interesting findings, they are too few to allow for in-depth analysis of the phenomenon; more research is needed to extend our knowledge.

In sum, there is a substantial and growing body of qualitative scholarship on the economic dimensions of civil war. Attention has been paid to the different roles that resources play in war economies, to the ways in which ‘shadow networks’ establish links between war zones and the global economy, and to the ways in which resources shape systems of rebel governance. Yet, although much good quality information has been gathered on economic activities in war zones, there has been a tendency to look primarily at activities believed to be directly connected to the war efforts of belligerents. In order to do justice to the complexity of war economies, future studies need to distinguish between different forms of economic interaction and to take stock of the whole range of economic incentives and activities in conflict-affected areas.

### *Hybrid (resource) governance arrangements*

A dominant theme in the surveyed literature was the notion of hybrid governance, referring to arrangements with both formal and informal components. Most of this literature attempts to develop a better understanding of the organisation of daily life in so-called ‘failed’, ‘collapsed’, or ‘fragile’ states (Cleaver 2002; Menkhaus 2006; Lund 2006; Raeymaekers et al. 2008; Boege et al. 2008; Arnaut et al. 2008; Hagmann and Péclard 2010; Garrett et al. 2009). Some scholars argue that the emergence of alternative or hybrid forms of governance is a positive evolution, which may help to fill some of the gaps created by the malfunctioning or absence of formal state institutions (Menkhaus 2006; Wiuff Moe 2009; Trefon and Cogels 2006; Logan 2009; Crook and Booth 2011; Boege Clements and Brown 2009). Others state that these hybrid governance frameworks may contribute to the erosion of formal institutional arrangements established by the state (Menocal, Fritz and Rakner 2008; Schmid 2001). Still others claim that the outcomes of hybrid governance should be considered as variable and context-dependent (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999; Raeymaekers 2009; Garrett et al. 2009; Beall 2006).

The literature on hybrid governance in fragile and conflict-affected areas is expanding quickly and has given rise to the creation of a wide range of analytical tools. However, theorisation and research on the phenomenon of hybrid *resource* governance remain underdeveloped, particularly with regard to conflict areas. Of the 29 papers that came out of the survey and that deal with issues of hybrid governance, 11 examine hybrid resource governance in non-conflict zones; only 7 address hybrid resource governance in conflict-affected areas.

The surveyed literature on hybrid governance identifies three commonalities among such arrangements: historicity, hybridity and negotiability. Their *historicity* reveals itself in the long and complex pedigree of the building blocks of hybrid governance. According to Cleaver (2002), people tend to draw on sources from the past when they are working out arrangements to organise various aspects of political, economic, and social life. This can be considered ‘institutional bricolage’, that is, “a process by which people consciously and unconsciously draw on existing social and cultural arrangements to shape institutions in response to changing situations” (Cleaver 2002: 26). Menkhaus (2006) illustrates this dynamic in the context of Somalia, where some local polities are run by coalitions of (traditional) clan elders, professional mayors, non-governmental organisations, and businesspeople. In some places, UNICEF municipal piped water systems have been

outsourced to a multi-clan consortium of businesspeople. This proves that historical forms of social organisation can play an important role in the development of alternative forms of governance in contexts of state collapse (Menkhaus 2006: 86). Regarding *hybridity*, Lund (2006) introduces the term ‘twilight institution’ to highlight the hybrid nature of alternative forms of governance in fragile and conflict-affected areas. He illustrates these dynamics with the example of vigilantes in Niger who, during the 1990s, legitimised their policing operations by mixing symbols of authority from the official police, the prefecture, the chieftaincy, and the field of witchcraft.

Finally, the *negotiability* of hybrid forms of governance refers to the not fixed and stable, but rather fluid and unstable character of these forms of governance, that are subject to constant processes of bargaining between different parties. Raeymaekers (2006) notes that, during the period of civil war, cross-border mineral traders on the DRC-Uganda border made pre-financing agreements with the dominant rebel movement and agreed to pay advances in taxes in return for the rebels’ protection; these negotiations resulted in new regulatory frameworks and hybrid forms of resource governance (Raeymaekers 2006: 123). Titeca (2006) highlights the negotiated nature of hybrid governance through long-term ethnographic fieldwork on the ‘Opec boys’, a group of youngsters involved in the illicit trafficking of fuel in Arua, a Ugandan border town close to the DRC. According to Titeca, the Opec boys are engaged in a process of constant negotiation with local politicians - the Opec boys need the support of local politicians to prevent their goods from being confiscated, while the same politicians need the support of the Opec boys to safeguard their political power at the local level (Titeca 2006). Both studies illustrate how resources play an important role in the emergence and formation of negotiated forms of governance in fragile and conflict-affected areas, although they are not specific to hybrid *resource* governance. Garrett et al. (2009) describe how one brigade of the Congolese army (FARDC), based in a mineral-rich district, sustained itself by relying on a complex mix of mining and mineral marketing activities as well as the taxation of mineral transport routes. The brigade set up an unofficial system of governance, which can be described as “coercive security governance,” that is, “an institutionalized political and economic system of rules that allows reliability of agreements between the military leadership and the civilian population” (Garrett et al. 2009: 11).

Despite the plethora of new analytic tools from this literature, there have not been corresponding attempts to systematically gather empirical evidence. Some authors have invented new concepts without applying them to concrete cases of hybrid governance (e.g. Raeymaekers et al. 2008), while many of these analytic devices do not seem particularly suitable for the analysis of hybrid resource governance. Concepts such as ‘institutional bricolage’ (Cleaver 2002), ‘twilight institutions’ (Lund 2006), and ‘mediated statehood’ (Menkhaus 2006) serve well to describe certain features of hybrid governance in general, but they are not useful for the analysis of resource-related issues.

Without evidence for these analytic tools, much of the literature on hybrid governance still relies on unsubstantiated assumptions - for example, that statehood is negotiable in all places and at all times. Doornbos criticises this assumption: “in today’s realities, the deliberate negotiation of crucial stakeholder interests by those in power in a number of countries may leave little room for any ‘negotiation’ about reconfiguring statehood to begin with” (Doornbos 2010: 761). There is a risk of underestimating power differences between parties and downplaying the structural constraints people face when they try to influence existing systems of natural resource governance, or when they attempt to obtain access to natural resources. At the same time, some research on hybrid governance tends to limit attention to non-state mechanisms, institutions, and rules. Researchers argue that in contexts of state

failure people are more inclined to resort to forms of governance rooted in local or indigenous practices than to forms of state governance (see for example Menkhaus 2006; Debiel and Lambach 2007). However, other research such as Tull's (2003) points at continuities with, and recycling of, formal governance practices, as is the case in the DRC where local strongmen rely on the existing administrative apparatus despite revolting against the central regime in Kinshasa. Likewise, Dobler (2009) describes how local administrators on the Namibian border with Angola continue to apply state regulations in their daily work: "their interest in expanding the state's reach is both concrete and tangible; at the same time, it is complemented by a modernist vision of development that favours bureaucratic, formalised solutions and sees the state as an important factor for channelling economic change" (Dobler, 2009: 130–131).

Some of the reviewed literature on hybrid governance pays specific attention to the experiences of conflict-affected populations. This is particularly so in the case of a number of policy reports, which are exploring the consequences of the militarisation of mining for artisanal miners (Global Witness, 2009: 27–33) or are illustrating illegal taxation systems created by armed groups at mines in the DRC (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 51–57). Other studies on hybrid governance pay scant attention to the interests of conflict-affected populations. Some papers are limited to an evaluation of newly emerging institutions, mechanisms, and procedures in contexts of state fragility. They neglect the people creating, (ab)using, (re)shaping, operating, or sabotaging them. For example, Menkhaus (2006) contends that "however vulnerable (...) local systems of governance are, they have the added advantage of enjoying a high degree of legitimacy and local ownership, something that cannot always be said of the inorganic, top-down state building projects associated with national reconciliation conferences (...)" (Menkhaus, 2006: 82–83). This suggests a binary opposition between local systems of governance - organic, bottom-up processes of growth with widespread acceptance among the population - and national state-building projects - inorganic, top-down processes of growth with a lack of popular support. No empirical evidence is provided to support the argument, however, such as concrete examples of problems or cases handled by local governance systems.

Complementary to the focus on 'failed' states, hybrid governance has also attracted increased interest in the analysis of borderlands. Some of the reviewed studies note that in countries where state power is weak, border areas distinguish themselves from other geographic areas through a higher level of 'legal pluralism' (Roitman 2005: 18): multiple state and non-state authorities try to profit from local economic activities by taxing economic operators and by subjecting them to a wide variety of rules and regulations. It is argued that this is especially so when the borderland concerned is rich in natural resources.

Several studies document ordinary people taking advantage of the regulatory imbroglio characteristic of borderlands in weak states. In many parts of West and Central Africa, illicit cross-border trade has witnessed a dramatic expansion in the past few decades. Cross-border trading networks have capitalised on the porosity of international borders, the lack of serious border controls, and the malfunctioning of public services to import and export goods in unofficial ways (MacGaffey 1991; Meagher 2001, 2003; Chalfin 2001; Nugent et al. 1996). A number of studies illustrate the negotiability of this cross-border trade and the establishment of a set of 'practical norms' that diverge from the official laws and regulations, and that result from on-going processes of negotiation between those who monitor cross-border trade flows and those who organise them (Titeca 2006; Titeca and De Herdt 2010).

The evidence base of these studies suffers from several shortcomings and weaknesses. First, authors tend to over-generalise existing trading dynamics, implying that all traders operating in a certain area organise their activities the same way. Roitman (2005) overemphasises the criminal character of certain forms of cross-border trade in West Africa. In contrast, MacGaffey (1991) gives an exaggeratedly rosy picture of cross-border trade in Central Africa, thereby contributing to the depiction of the informal economy as an overly benign phenomenon. Secondly, some of these borderlands studies provide limited empirical evidence for the arguments they develop on natural resource governance. Chalfin (2001), for instance, contends that the cross-border trade in North-Eastern Ghana plays an important role in the “discursive constitution of the state” and in its “practical and experiential realisation”. Although this research is based on long-term anthropological fieldwork, it does not outline the research design nor does it provide detailed information about the research techniques used. Finally, many surveyed borderlands studies too easily assume that the dynamics of hybrid resource governance in border areas are necessarily different from those in other parts of the country. Because borderlands have many distinctive features, it is assumed that the ways of exploiting, trading, and managing natural resources in those places must also be radically different. While studies on borderlands contain a considerable number of case studies, the literature review did not find any research that systematically analyses the similarities and differences between hybrid governance in borderlands settings, and hybrid governance in other areas.

Despite these concerns, the reviewed studies on resource governance in borderlands are characterised by a relatively strong focus on conflict-affected populations, and have considered them in the development of the research design and in the definition of the research focus. Studies examine how the political, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics of border settings influence people’s actions, strategies, and choices. Borderlands research considers various groups of actors who operate at different levels of society and wield varying degrees of power. Contributors to a volume edited by Nugent and Asiwaju (1996), for example, focus on ordinary people in different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, dealing with the advantages and disadvantages of living in a border area, and paying specific attention to individual actors’ agency. Other scholars put emphasis on the forces that limit their freedom of action. In her research on cross-border trade in West Africa, Meagher documents the astuteness of certain traders who manage to circumvent legal regulations and exploit loopholes in the system, and also discusses the elements that make life difficult for them (Meagher 2001, 2003). It should be emphasised, however, that the richly documented studies of Nugent, Asiwaju and Meagher pertain to areas not considered to be conflict-affected. Despite the growing literature on hybrid governance arrangements, the literature searches highlight the dearth of publications dealing with the importance of these arrangements in resource-rich and conflict-affected regions, and the implications for the inhabitants of these areas.

#### *Resource governance and post-conflict reconstruction*

A relatively recent and prominent theme in the reviewed literature is the role and development of a solid, transparent, and well-functioning system of resource governance for resource-rich countries recovering from violent conflict. Two assumptions support this perspective: (i) authors believe that a transparent and accountable resource governance system will help to prevent new eruptions of resource-related violence, and (ii) authors assume that this will contribute to the country’s economic revival, as it will create a more stable business climate, attract new investors, and ensure that governments use their resource



revenues to improve the well-being of the population (Binns and Maconachie 2005; Maconachie and Hilson 2011; Global Witness 2010; Ansoms and Marysse 2011).

The literature on the links between resource governance and post-conflict reconstruction covers a number of topics, including the renegotiation of mining contracts concluded during war situations (Ford and Tienhaara 2010), the fight against corrupt practices inherited from war-time political elites (Grant 2005), and initiatives to render the commodity chain of so-called 'conflict minerals' more transparent (Cuvelier 2013; IPIS 2011). Other topics include the development of alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants and unemployed youth in the artisanal mining sector (Maconachie and Hilson 2011; McCandless and Tyler 2006), the need to establish a solid regulatory framework (Garrett et al. 2010), and problems associated with the continued militarisation of the mining sector (de Koning 2009; Garrett et al. 2009).

Much of this literature is directly oriented towards policy. It relies on an evidence base comprising interviews and consultations with stakeholders in the various branches of the resource sector such as trade union representatives, cooperatives, public servants and decision-makers at the local, regional, and national levels. However, part of these publications tends to be based on normative and unsubstantiated assumptions. Several studies assume a direct relationship between resources and conflict without establishing the validity or empirical evidence of this link. This is particularly the case for reports published by policy groups that call for an end to the trade in minerals from conflict areas. These calls are based on the assumption that armed groups use the revenues from the conflict trade to finance their war efforts (see for example IPIS 2002; Global Witness 2009; UNSC 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008), yet these studies present very little empirical evidence. There is also a lack of detailed information on how state and non-state armed groups manage resource revenues, which makes it premature to present strong statements regarding their motivations for controlling mineral-rich areas.

Research on the role of resources in post-conflict reconstruction is generally geared towards finding solutions for the management of resource abundance in areas where the state is struggling to get a firm footing, a situation considered to be intrinsically problematic and conflict-prone. There appears to be widespread conviction that resources should be high on the policy agenda, because of their potential role as a curse or blessing. The dominant argument that resource abundance is an ambiguous and unpredictable force and must be checked by a strong government, is not supported by empirical evidence but stems from the same normative assumptions that have dominated the debate on the relationship between resources and conflict in the past few decades. This implies the risk that resource-related problems will be addressed with inappropriate, ready-made solutions. An example is the call for the formalisation of the artisanal mining sector in areas emerging from a long period of violent conflict such as Sierra Leone. Because of the belief that the illegal diamond trade was a key factor in prolonging the civil war, decision-makers at the national and international level have emphasised regaining control over the diamond trade. Efforts have been made to bring the processes of exploiting and trading diamonds under government control so that rebel groups will not have the opportunity to profit. Meanwhile, other resource-related problems, such as persistent corruption or the marginalisation of artisanal miners, run a serious risk of being neglected or ignored.

## Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This paper has assessed the quality of data presented in studies that analyse the different ways resource governance affects people living in fragile and conflict-affected areas. Resources and their linkages with conflict-affected areas have attracted much attention in recent literature on conflict dynamics, which has led to the development of a vast body of valuable case studies and quantitative models. The literature survey, however, shows considerable variation in the evidence base for the different claims being made. Much attention has been paid to claims that resource abundance increases the risk of bad governance and conflict, and that economic incentives are the explanatory factor of armed groups' strategies. While these claims have a significant impact on policy and have had the effect of narrowing down the attention to resource control in conflict settings, the evidence in support of these claims is largely macro-level orientated and tends to overlook the complexities of armed actors' motivations and incentive structures. The same literature tends to overlook the local level and the position and role of populations. Valuable local-level empirical data on aspects of resource control in conflict areas are presented in policy-oriented reports, but most of these studies do not question their assumptions regarding the connections between resources and conflict, and fail to move beyond normative perspectives.

Because of the limited evidence base, the assumed links between resources and conflict have been challenged by studies aimed at unravelling the complexities of governance structures in conflict areas, but also increasingly in borderlands. Yet even these studies pay limited attention to the particular characteristics of resource governance. Conflict studies that do, tend to focus on the interplay between formal and non-formal actors, institutions, and processes from a more general perspective, and are characterised by a lack of conceptual clarity. Studies more generally analysing resource governance frameworks, in turn, usually do not pertain to conflict situations. Moreover, what we know about the effects of resource governance on local populations is either case-specific or fragmentary, and seldom specifically relates to conflict-affected regions. There is a lack of empirical data on the impact of emerging hybrid resource governance systems on populations living in fragile and conflict-affected areas, and we know very little about how ordinary people interact with power-holders and how these interactions inform existing hybrid governance structures.

The assessment of the quality of available information in the selected literature was hindered by a number of constraints. While many studies claim to be based on empirical observations, in most cases little or no information was provided on evidence collection. This is particularly the case with studies that rely on ethnographic approaches, less so with quantitative studies. The absence of a clear description of the methodology does not rule out that studies are based on rigorous methods of data-collection and that the information collected represents relevant evidence. However, authors often fail to explain what they regard to be 'evidence' or why specific information is considered to be evidence for the claims they make. There is also scant recognition that underlying research questions define the kind of evidence authors are looking for. This is particularly problematic for studies relying on secondary sources, and consequently tends to reinforce dominant normative claims on resources and conflict.

From the analysis of the selected literature, a number of gaps and areas for future research can be identified that can be sorted into three main fields: (i) hybrid resource governance; (ii) rebel governance and resources; (iii) and the position and participation of local populations in resource governance.

### *Hybrid resource governance*

Although institutional outcomes of interactions between state and non-state actors in conflict-affected areas have received increased research attention, limited consensus exists on the nature and popular legitimacy of these new governance frameworks. Little evidence also exists on the impact of conflict environments and rebel interference on the institutional organisation of pre-existing informal systems of resource exploitation and control. In addition to historical research on conflict changing informal regulatory systems, there is a need for micro-level comparative research on hybrid resource governance frameworks in conflict-affected areas and under peaceful conditions. This will make it possible to understand whether, and how, conflict conditions affect the development of alternative, hybrid governance frameworks. The interconnectedness of local resource exploitation and global markets has received attention from academics, advocacy groups, donors, and international agencies, leading to numerous reports on commodity chains and the different actors involved. However, this knowledge provides a limited understanding of the increasing engagement of informal actors in local and cross-border processes of resource governance. While there is a growing literature on the different functions of informality in a context of 'hybrid' governance, little is known about the dynamics and effects of informal globalisation and the increased connection of non-state actors to globalised economic networks with natural resources as key commodities.

### *Rebel governance and resources*

Limited information exists on the governance capacity and performance of non-state armed groups. Few studies have been conducted on their provision of basic public services such as security and justice and their attempts to involve civilians living in the territories they control in their own governance frameworks. Evidence exists on rebels' income-generating strategies, but this evidence is mainly used to support claims that armed groups are guided by predatory behaviour, and that control over resources is needed to finance war efforts. Less is known about the functioning of rebel-controlled tax regimes to regulate commercial activities, racketeer practices, or rebel provision of security in return for resources.

### *Resource governance and the position and strategies of people living in conflict-affected areas*

Some of the selected studies illustrate the remarkable tendency of groups to create their own sets of rules and principles for the organisation of different spheres of life (including the exploitation and trade of natural resources) when faced with the threats of uncertainty and insecurity as a result of the malfunctioning of the state. Limited knowledge exists, however, about the ways in which actors at the micro-level position themselves *vis-à-vis* these newly created systems of local governance. As stated before, there is also limited evidence available on how hybrid arrangements of resource governance in fragile or conflict-affected areas impact on people's access to, and control over, local resources. Nevertheless, increased attention has been paid to how people survive in conflict conditions, with growing evidence on livelihood diversification strategies and the emergence of new forms of risk-induced economic activities. The same literature has observed a shift in conflict-affected rural areas to various economic activities outside the agricultural sector (described as 'distress-push diversification'). While existing literature offers some insights into the resilience and adaptation of populations living in conflict-affected areas, less is known about how shifts in

power constellations and reconfigurations in hybrid governance frameworks affect livelihoods.

To conclude, the literature review has revealed that there is limited consensus on how to approach and conceptualise resource-related issues in conflict-affected areas. In addition, dominant concepts lack empirical testing. In particular, there is little evidence on how conflict impacts frameworks of resource governance, how these frameworks define people's access to and control over resources, and how in return populations deal with these frameworks. Little is known either about the specific role of armed actors in shaping these resource arrangements. Most studies start from the assumption that these actors are driven by predatory ambition and pay limited attention to their attempts to create or support local governance processes. The main challenge, therefore, will be the development of a comprehensive micro-perspective on 'hybrid' resource governance arrangements and to integrate resource-related issues into research on peace, security, and post-conflict reconstruction.

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**Contact details:**

**email:** [Intdev.jsrp@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Intdev.jsrp@lse.ac.uk)

**Web:** [lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/JSRP/jsrp.aspx](http://lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/JSRP/jsrp.aspx)

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7849 4631