



ACADEMIA ENGELBERG

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Undetermined?

Case Study from India - a summary of the workshop session

Presenters: Archi Rastogi and Manish Jain

1. Workshop Theme

The workshop session discussed a case study of a proposed mine in a poor province of India. This backdrop highlights the complex issues associated with economic growth in India. India is growing tremendously but that growth has not addressed several issues for the poorest sections of the county. The presentation in the morning session discussed the same dichotomy; the workshop made it all the more apparent in development and industrial projects.

The chosen case study was a recent and contentious issue that was fought in the Supreme Court of India. The case concerned bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri hills, an area inhabited by a primitive tribe. Interests of varying groups are juxtaposed in such cases and these were brought up by the workshops.

2. Approach

The participants were introduced to the topic and were divided into four interest groups: the tribal, the mining corporation, the provincial government, and the environmentalists. Each group was assigned to draw up their arguments for or against the mining. They were asked to deliberate, particularly, on the following questions:

1. Do you want Niyamgiri to be mined? What is 'growth' for you in this case—to mine or not to mine?
2. What is your interest in Niyamgiri? What is the legitimacy of your claim and your power?
3. If we were to mine Niyamgiri, what would be the opportunities and constraints for you?
4. If your interests were out of the picture, whose interests should be supreme in making the decision? Why?
5. Do you want national growth? Do you want local development? How are they different for you? What are the trade-offs between them?

This was followed by presentations by the four groups and an open discussion.



3. Outcomes

The discussion touched upon various issues of economic growth: growth for whom; growth when one group is grossly at a disadvantage; whether growth is really desirable. Particularly in a pluralistic and free society such as India, every project has several perspectives. The workshop introduced participants to some of the dilemma that is inherent in such decisions, especially when the number of actors is large, such as it is in India. This was followed by reflection on how economic growth is an opportunity and a constraint from when viewed from divergent perspectives. The divergent backgrounds of the participants enriched the discussion through the perspectives from different countries. Participants also discussed their concerns over international projects—where liabilities and profits are dissociated to the detriment of the environment.