Resistance and integration: Working with capitalism at its fringes

Jacob Vakkayil

Abstract. This article focuses on a specific setting characterized by the strong presence of indigenous enterprises against the backdrop of a wider capitalist system associated with the national economy. Rather than adopting an essentialist approach aimed at the delineation of their special features, this study focuses on the idea of "indigeneity" and examines different ways in which it acts in the process of enterprising. Results show that entrepreneurs interpret indigeneity in flexible ways as they simultaneously pursue both integration and resistance while responding to capitalism. These opposing projects illustrate the performative action of indigeneity as it functions as a flexible tool in the articulation of diverse social formations in the context. The paper points to challenges and opportunities for the survival of alternate systems at the fringes of advancing capitalist formations.

Keywords: tribal, Indigenous enterprise, Meghalaya, India.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people currently live in some of the poorest and the most vulnerable communities in the world (Hall & Patrinos, 2012). Marginalized by colonialism and subsequent state-building efforts, they are characterized by increasing alienation of land and sub-surface rights. Many of the resource rich areas of the globe are inhabited by communities of indigenous people and the advent of corporations into these areas have often led to enduring conflicts (Whiteman, 2009). They face discrimination in established socio-economic systems, and even well-intentioned efforts such as those aimed at sustainable development do not work to their advantage (Nikolakis, Nelson & Cohen, 2014). Across continents, they seem to encounter similar recurring dilemmas concerning the enunciation of socio-spatial identities and the assertion of rights against states and corporations (Barnerjee, 2000).

There have been calls for increased attention to the empowerment of indigenous people to function as effective economic agents, able to participate in the fast-expanding global economic sphere through culturally distinctive forms of wealth creation (Dana, 1995; Hindle & Landsdowne, 2005; Peredo et. al., 2004; Swinney & Runyan, 2007). Toward this, indigenous enterprises have been actively promoted through special legal provisions and conducive policies in many countries including New Zealand, Australia, United States, and Canada. In these settings, a number of special characteristics that differentiate indigenous enterprises from others around them are often highlighted. These include collectivistic orientation in ownership and management (Berkes & Adhikari, 2006), the dominance of cultural and social objectives (Curry, 2003), and a strong

attachment to geographic territories in which these communities are located (Barker & Pickerill, 2012; Sullivan, 2013). However, sustaining this argument based on a clear set of characteristics that differentiate indigenous enterprises from multiple entrepreneurial formations characterizing economic systems across the world has not been easy (Swinney & Runyan, 2007). Attributed characteristics of indigenous enterprises such as collectivistic orientation are not unique to indigenous people and thus not highly useful in differentiating their essential qualities. In general, literature points to a necessity for going beyond essentialist efforts that focus on membership criteria (Merlan, 2009), and for adopting other approaches to understand enterprising in indigenous contexts better.

Rather than focusing on the characteristics of indigenous enterprises, this study draws attention to the concept of *indigeneity* as it is deployed in enterprising. Indigeneity indicates a state of being and a possessed characteristic that comes from being indigenous. Thus, it is a quality that actors indicate while identifying themselves and their enterprises as indigenous. Attempts to understand indigeneity in the project of enterprising have to be foregrounded against the context of capitalist market systems where entrepreneurial activities form a core component. It has been argued that indigenous practices can point to desirable directions in which current economic systems might be transformed (Fenelon & Hall, 2008). However, others have noted influences in the opposite direction through a coupling of both indigeneity and capitalism resulting in *indigenous capitalism* (Bunten, 2010) or *neo-tribal capitalism* (Strathdee, 2013). These assemblies point to the usefulness of approaching indigenous enterprising from a processual perspective that recognizes the contingent ways in which indigeneity can be enacted against the backdrop of the systems and practices associated with capitalism. This paper responds to this need by examining a specific sphere of indigenous enterprise in the context of the overarching influences of the broader capitalist system surrounding it. Thus, the specific research question driving this research can be stated as:

> How do tribal entrepreneurs interpret indigeneity in the articulation of entrepreneurial formations at the peripheries of capitalist systems?

I use the sensitizing concept of *articulation* (Hall, 1980, 1986) signifying the assembly of multiple elements to result in particular social formations. Thus, various elements involved in a social formation such as those associated with capitalism are not firmly and permanently aligned with it. On the contrary, they are assembled in a contingent way depending upon historical and structural contingencies (Clifford, 2001). From this perspective, I explore the "doing" of indigeneity as formations of disparate elements are constructed and demolished. Thus the specific aim of this paper is to explore how entrepreneurs interpret the indigeneity of their enterprises as they seek to advance their projects in relation to the systems and practices of the capitalist context.

This paper advances earlier work by drawing attention to the contradictory action of indigeneity as it lends itself to both integration and resistance vis-à-vis the overarching capitalist system. The conceptual framing of indigeneity as a *performative tool* is proposed drawing attention to its use by entrepreneurs to establish legitimacy, describe organization and indicate entrepreneurial outcomes. This conceptualization brings greater clarity to the contradictory action of significant elements in the articulation of disparate social formations. It also enables a fine-grained view of differentiation within social units and illuminates forces driving the inconsistent actions of certain actors within these formations.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISES

Indigenous enterprises generally refer to those that are created and managed by indigenous people through culturally appropriate practices that serve entrepreneurial aims. As such, indigenous enterprises seem to have special characteristics that differentiate them from other similar ventures. Many argue that business activities and entrepreneurship in indigenous communities differ fundamentally from similar activities in other societies, and that they should be approached conceptually in a different way (Peredo & Anderson, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2010). Others favor their conceptualization in a less differentiated way, for example, as a special form of social enterprise (Overall, Tapsell & Woods, 2010; Pearson & Helms, 2013). Nevertheless, drawing from indigenous values and ways of life, the literature on indigenous enterprises indicates important distinctions.

Three important realms of difference are prominent in this literature. First, a collectivistic orientation is highlighted as a key cultural feature of indigenous people across the globe (Redpath & Nielsen, 1997). Particularities associated with collectivism drive economic activities of indigenous people considerably (Peredo & McLean, 2010). Land and other key resources are often collectively owned and managed. Communities are characterized by strong kinship-based organization which is also reflected in enterprise. Business activities involve reciprocity and trust (Dana, 2007; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Overall, et al., 2010), often within networks of families and extended clans (Berkes & Adhikari, 2006). Second, indigenous enterprises are characterized by social and cultural objectives. Efforts for socio-economic developments go hand in hand with a desire to strengthen the traditional culture (Anderson, 1999). When enterprises blend well with traditional culture, they are likely to be more successful and sustainable (Cahn, 2008). Business activities usually reflect prominent values of the community strongly (Morrison, 2008), market systems that are alien to the setting can be transformed and modified to serve cultural goals and social objectives (Curry, 2003). Third, indigenous enterprises are usually strongly tied to a particular geographic milieu. A sense of place and rootedness to the land are anchors utilized to define indigenous identities (Anderson, Dana & Dana, 2006). They often refer to lost homelands and sacred spaces to maintain their sense of identity, and dislocation from these homelands can be disastrous (Barker & Pickerill, 2012). As a result, the preservation of sacred lands and restitution of alienated territories are often measures associated with the protection of indigenous cultures (Sullivan, 2013). The irreplaceable physical setting within which the community of indigenous people live forms the bedrock of resources on which indigenous enterprises are created and sustained making their transplantation to other settings extremely difficult. They are thus ecologically embedded (Whiteman & Cooper, 2000) and this deeply rooted nature of enterprising differentiates indigenous enterprises in a substantial way from others (Cahn, 2008).

Considering the variety and spread of indigenous communities around the world, it is not surprising that the three realms of difference outlined above have been problematic. Anticipated differences between indigenous and mainstream entrepreneurs on many dimensions may be non-existent in certain settings (Swinney & Runyan, 2007). Yet certain enterprises are recognized in their particular contexts as being legitimately indigenous. First, the idea of collective ownership has not been universally

applicable —as illustrated by Larson and Zalanga (2004) who compared the individual ownership patterns of indigenous enterprises in Malaysia with collective ownership patterns of those in Fiji. Foley (2004) pointed out that the use of common resources of the community for individual gains by entrepreneurs has been considered problematic. Moreover, community orientation and kinship-based organization are adopted by non-indigenous business communities as well. Studies focusing on ethnic or immigrant enterprises have repeatedly pointed to collectivity as a core feature of these businesses (Bonacich, 1973; Light, 1972; Waldinger, 1986). Second, there has been great interest in social objectives of business in recent times outside the sphere of the indigenous giving rise to the increased visibility of social enterprises. (Tedmanson, Essers, Dey & Verduyn, 2015). Moreover, rather than intra-clan relationships, rooted in homogenous values, often what becomes more important in indigenous entrepreneurship is the ability to establish ties that bridge across heterogeneous groups (Lindsay, Lindsay & Jordan, 2006). Third, the idea of rootedness has also been critiqued as a differentiator of indigenous enterprises, as entrepreneurs are expanding their businesses beyond indigenous reserves or rural settings and operating them successfully in urban contexts more strongly characterized by mainstream capitalistic systems. Foley (2006) reports that urban indigenous entrepreneurs do not indicate the loss of the indigeneity of their businesses as result of their location in the urban milieu. On the other hand, being located in ancestral lands does not guarantee the continuation of sustainable and ecologically embedded modes of business. One example is the case of Kayapo Indians who embraced exploitative logging in collaboration with timber companies after they successfully gained land rights over their territories (Conklin & Graham, 1995).

Thus, the idea of indigeneity—defined in terms of a static way of life that is frozen in time and as a "primordial identity" (Niezen, 2003:3) of people whose life styles have remained unchanged over the years—can lead to obvious problems. These problems are also reflected in the current conceptualizations of indigenous enterprises that focus on highlighting their differences to enable appropriate identification and analysis. It becomes clear that to understand indigenous enterprises better, we need to move beyond efforts to clearly identify the category of the indigenous and setting conditions for its membership through a criteria-based approach (Merlan, 2009).

ARTICULATION AND INDIGENEITY

In this study, the concept of articulation (Hall, 1980) is used to help approach the working of indigeneity in a non-essential manner. Articulation in social theory refers to how multiple cultural elements are combined to achieve specific interests. These connections are temporary, functional for the moment, and able to be disassembled or reconnected as convenient. The articulation approach is sensitive to how differences are handled by inclusion or exclusion within an articulated arrangement. Elements of various ideologies or systems can be joined together within a discourse under certain conditions. Thus, these elements do not strictly belong to one or the other ideology but can be connected to one or the other in a contingent way depending on contextual factors. As a result, "crucial political and cultural positions are not firmly anchored on one side or the other but are contested and up for grabs" (Clifford, 2001:477). Thus, articulations give rise to temporary and disputed arrangements of unity before the weight of diversities lead to challenges to these arrangements

(Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Thus, a focus on articulation recognizes that the creation of differences, and subsequent classifications are not essential but tactical.

Even though such combinations are brought forth in a highly contingent manner, they happen in the context of the agency of historical institutions and structural power (Berman, 1984; Glassman, 2003). However, structures fail to contain them fully, making the state of social realities a result of both the imposing structures with roots in the past and the convenient alliances/combinations of the present. If we adopt an articulation perspective, indigeneity can be approached with a focus on the formation of combinations to achieve particular aims in a certain socio-historical context. This does not reduce indigeneity to a question of identity, but informs us how such identities are defined and used in connecting to and separating from certain other elements in the context. As a result actors/subjects are conceptualized as having identities, which are the result of precarious and contingent articulatory practices (Laclau, 1985).

The articulation perspective does not treat meaning as a prior property of elements such as texts, but as brought forth in a historical moment with the contingencies of the situation (Moffitt, 1993). In the case of indigeneity, such meaning-making happens in the context of colonial historicity and subsequent post/neo-colonial realities (Banerjee, 2000). For example, when cultural tests for determining indigeneity can be indecisive, the idea of descent is often employed as the most convenient way of identifying the indigenous (Kuper, 2003), neo-tribal assertions in many parts of the world have been driven by a sense of identity by birth (Rata, 2000). While this has been resisted pointing to its roots in the colonial conceptualization of differences (McCormack, 2011), it has also been justified on the basis of their histories of discrimination and injustice (Kenrick & Lewis, 2004; Kvaale, 2011; Paradies, 2006).

Particular enactments of indigeneity have helped certain communities to appeal better to external actors, and thus to increase capital flow into their territories (Valdivia, 2005). Global activism and subsequent recognition of indigenous rights have prompted communities to exhibit images that are considered ecologically appropriate to procure various advantages (Conklin, 2006; Graham & Penny, 2014). This leads to the possibility that indigenous people themselves may embrace or reject the officially approved categories that may often be related to special rights and privileges (Lee, 2006; Li, 2000; Povinelli, 2002). Often, communities that do not meet externally imposed standards risk their authenticity being questioned (Muehlmann, 2009). This makes it important to examine indigeneity with sensitivity to issues of power and advantage, which invariably surround the definitions of indigeneity and the allocation of rights based on them.

From this perspective, the question of authenticity becomes less interesting than exploring the processes and purposes served by attempts of authentication (Shah, 2007). Thus, authenticity involving elements such as language, traditions, etc. is not as important as the functionality of these elements in the process of articulation (Fontana, 2014). From this standpoint, indigeneity can survive and act even if certain elements such as native lands or religious beliefs, are re-articulated with new elements. This makes explorations of indigeneity more sensitive to the multiple ways in which elements are connected and foregrounded in a particular context. Insights are better gained by understanding the action of elements in the context of authentication practices (Rogers, 1996), which grant legitimacy to specific enactments of indigeneity. Thus, indigeneity is seen not as a natural category but as one that is constructed in social and political ways

(Hathaway, 2010). Articulated social formations involving indigeneity are contested and the result of a temporary settlement until further maneuverings bring forth new connections and alignments. When adopting an articulation approach, attention is paid to how the nebulous concept of indigeneity is made definitive contingently and temporarily.

INDIGENEITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ARTICULATION

Economic interests are among the primary drivers of many assertions concerning indigenous differentiation and market forces are intimately associated with indigenous resistance (Walter, 2010). Most often, these assertions are done against the backdrop of a capitalist, national economic system at the peripheries of which the indigenous enterprises generally exist. The effects of enterprising in these contexts have been explored from various perspectives. Focusing on economic impacts, it was found that while some indigenous enterprises have been successful, others have not survived beyond the initial seed funding from government (Furneaux & Brown, 2008). Attention has been drawn to the need to go beyond economic indicators to assess the impact of these enterprises. The argument is that indigenous enterprises have been instrumental in bringing a sense of liberation to their communities by attempting to remove the effects of colonialism and corporate incursions by working to revitalize pre-colonial economies (Foley, 2004; Gallagher & Selman, 2015; Hindle & Moroz, 2010). However, results from studies employing non-economic criteria such as conservation effects, health, and wellbeing also do not indicate a clear direction. While a few studies have shown a negative effect, leading to loss of special identity and absorption into the wider capitalist systems (Newhouse, 2001), others have observed that enterprising may indeed strengthen elements of indigeneity (Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012). In general, studies on the impact of practices of market enterprising on indigenous people show mixed results considering multiple criteria (Godoy, Reyes-Garcia, Byron, Leonard & Vadez, 2005; Lu, 2007).

The possibility of two-way interaction between capitalism and indigenous ways has also been explored, pointing to the potential of indigenous management practices to inform the activities of business corporations in many ways. This involves two-way learning through sustainable, long-term engagement (Crawley & Sinclair, 2003; Popova, 2014) where traditional ecological knowledge systems could complement scientific approaches while pursuing natural resource extraction (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005) and indigenous methodologies could help prevent catastrophes (Gosling & Case, 2013). However, there has also been skepticism about attempts to conceptualize features of indigeneity for corporate executives ignoring deeper differences inherent in separate world views (Banerjee & Linstead, 2004). Either way, the coexistence of capitalist and pre-capitalist indigenous elements typically result in an increase in the number and variety of institutions and key players in the field, bringing forth increased complexity in interactions and alliances. Considering the actions and processes involved in this complex web, the possible variety in the interpretation of indigeneity in this process of articulation could be particularly interesting.

In its application to an enterprise, the concept of indigeneity makes an ontological shift through an anthropomorphic extension of individual attributes of the owner-managers or other members to the enterprise itself. This can be particularly problematic and creates tensions regarding the way indigeneity is applied. Ambiguities exist in the case of enterprises with substantial partnerships with non-indigenous people. A particular case in

point concerns businesses by families where one partner is a non-indigenous. Even when this has been legally addressed through the specification of a particular percentage of ownership by the indigenous partner, inclusion and exclusion of enterprises into the indigenous category involves ambiguities (Hunter, 2013). Thus, the quality of indigeneity of the concerned enterprises in these situations needs to be negotiated and asserted by actors. A focus on articulation brings forth contestations and political maneuverings that go with attempts at inclusion and exclusion concerning indigenous enterprises in a given context. Indigenous enterprises need to be constantly constructed as authentic and their indigeneity must be asserted in these contestations. I examine ways in which this doing of indigeneity shapes activities and outcomes in the context of particular socio-political realities associated with the wider context of capitalism. Here, the quest is not to identify the immutable characteristics of the authentic indigenous enterprise, but to see how indigeneity is interpreted and used as entrepreneurs create and manage their enterprises at the fringes of a national capitalist system.

METHOD

RESEARCH CONTEXT

India has a large population of indigenous people, who are referred to as "*Adivasis*" or "scheduled tribes". The socio-political image of indigeneity in India was progressively created by multiple actors, such as anthropologists, colonial administrators, political agents, and the bureaucracy (Shah, 2007). Many of the specific mechanisms applicable to them were created and reinforced by governmental policies driven by the work of anthropologists, such as Verrier Elwin, who advocated a policy of preservation and self-determination (Guha, 1996).   Currently, a person's status as a member of one of the scheduled tribes confers on the individual certain privileges, including reservations for government jobs and educational opportunities as part of the affirmative action policies of the state. Areas inhabited by tribal communities are also declared as scheduled with special provisions for governance. To ensure the protection of the tribal way of life, there are restrictions concerning free movement of outsiders into tribal regions and transfer of tribal lands to non-tribal people. Karlsson (2008) points out that this framework of categorization and provision of special rights and privileges is applied through an essentially top-down approach where agency rests with the state for the improvement of the marginalized. Not surprisingly, despite these provisions, tribal communities remain some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in India (Baviskar, 2006).

The northeastern region of India is often characterized as one of its least developed regions. Connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, this region borders the countries of China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. It is home to culturally diverse communities of indigenous people, many of whom are categorized as scheduled tribes for administrative purposes. Many parts of this region are also characterized by armed struggles for greater local autonomy. This study focuses on Meghalaya in northeast India; this is an administrative unit (referred to as a "state" in India) within the federal structure of the country. Meghalaya is predominantly inhabited by tribal communities and forms part of the "sixth schedule" tribal areas designated for indigenous people.

The policy conditions that exist in Meghalaya, especially those associated with sixth schedule provisions privilege local tribal people in

business and economy. One of the most conspicuous among these provisions is that of restricted land ownership privileging local tribal people. There are also restrictions on business activities by non-tribal people and outsiders who require special permits. Despite these provisions, economic activities were dominated for a long time by non-tribal people who have traditionally been more astute in business and enterprise. During the colonial and post-colonial periods, business communities from elsewhere in India have flourished in Meghalaya, where significant indigenous entrepreneurial activity was deficient. This has, however, changed over the last few decades as a result of the combined forces of local political autonomy, improved connectivity of the region with mainland India, liberalization of the Indian economy, and the resultant operation of increased competitive forces. Entrepreneurial activities have become conspicuous in sectors such as construction, extractive industries, government contract and supply etc. Many small and medium enterprises have flourished, especially around urban areas. These are facilitated by continued existence of indigenous-friendly policies such as waiver of income tax for tribal individuals. Socially, this is supported by highly influential traditional bodies, responsible for local administration in much of the state. Overall, entrepreneurial awareness, opportunities and facilitative policies have led to indigenous ownership and management of many businesses in sectors earlier dominated by non-indigenous people. These developments make Meghalaya a highly interesting context to observe the operationalization of indigeneity in enterprising in the context of a recently liberalized capitalist economy.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for this work was done in Meghalaya during two field visits—in December 2012 to January 2013, and December 2014 to January 2015. I collected data using 31 interviews with owner-managers of tribal enterprises. All the interviewees belonged to the Khasi-Pnar people of Meghalaya, denoted by the government of India as a scheduled tribe (including the communities often locally indicated as Khasi, Jaintia, Syteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi ,and Lyngngam). Interviewees fully owned or were partners with other tribal people in one or more enterprises. In line with the matriarchal system of inheritance followed by these communities, the wealth of the family generally gets passed on from the mother to the youngest daughter and, in many cases, the interviewees had inherited their enterprises in this manner. In line with calls for broader definition of indigenous entrepreneurship (Hunter, 2013), I use the term "entrepreneur" inclusively to designate both categories—those who created enterprises and were running them as well as those who were managing inherited enterprises.

I first connected with potential interviewees through my relatives and acquaintances in the region, who could connect me to participants willing to be interviewed. This was then complemented by a broad snow-ball approach, where interviewees helped me to connect with other potential interviewees. Even while adopting such an approach, effort was made to obtain a sample representing various sectors in the area in which tribal entrepreneurs were prominent. There is also a mix of urban and rural enterprises, but this aspect was not a major consideration in identifying participants, as many businesses had activities that spread across locations and could not be categorized easily. I could obtain comparable participation in terms of gender, as 17 out of the 31 participants were women.

Most of the interviews were carried out in a setting outside their businesses such as their homes, cafés, etc., enhancing the informal atmosphere of these exchanges, and possibly yielding better openness. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was done in a semi-structured manner, led by probing questions where appropriate. At the beginning of these conversations, I introduced myself and outlined the broad purpose of interviews, assuring participants of anonymity and confidentiality. Conversations usually started with the challenges they faced as entrepreneurs and then proceeded to supporting factors and drivers for their enterprises. Most often, participants willingly shared the histories of their enterprises, key challenges, and how being indigenous did or did not make a difference in their projects. Usually, this soon expanded to general observations concerning the nature of tribal enterprises in Meghalaya and what they considered as desirable, undesirable, inevitable or avoidable. The status of indigeneity was most often viewed as natural and inevitable, but progressively conversations brought forth differences in interpretations or tensions experienced in describing elements of indigeneity. This was prompted by probing questions that elicited explanations concerning perceived differences with non-tribal enterprises around them, and how tribal values, needs and compulsions were interpreted and incorporated into the management of their businesses.

DATA ANALYSIS

In handling data, I followed the guidelines from Miles and Huberman (1994) and Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013), broadly. However, a description of data analysis as a stage-wise process is not accurate for describing the process employed in this work. As in most qualitative work, data collection and steps of analyses were not done in linear stages but were overlapping and iterative. Data collation and transcription were simultaneously characterized by reflection and identification of tentative first order themes. The first effort was to understand what categories were used when entrepreneurs spoke about indigeneity concerning their enterprises. This was done in an inductive manner that allowed the relevant categories to emerge from data. Further repeated readings and reflection resulted in the refinement of initial themes, which were assembled to form aggregated themes and, subsequently, three broad dimensions. Simultaneously with this effort, the orientation of these emerging categories to the formations associated with the national capitalist system was examined. The aggregated themes were closely examined by exploring how descriptions indicated particular stances concerning relationships or interactions with the capitalist system at the sidelines of which the indigenous sector existed. Collecting data in two waves with a gap of months between them helped the process of data analysis by affording opportunity for reflection and further exploration of literature. I did not find notable differences between the responses obtained during both periods. Though references were made to relevant developments and news during the period, the interpretations of entrepreneurs did not reveal significant variations.

I used the idea of articulation to understand the construction of similarities and differences with the capitalist system and to explore how related institutional elements are imagined as connected to or separated from the particular conceptualization of indigeneity. First, I noted that participants acknowledged the prominence of being indigenous in entrepreneurial efforts. This was explained through opinions and affirmations on many aspects of enterprising, emphasized through the

narration of both personal experiences and stories of other enterprises they observed around them. I analyzed these and made repeated attempts to classify the emergent ideas in multiple ways to obtain first order concepts, and combined them to obtain dominant themes. While these themes emerged, I also noted that the particular ways in which entrepreneurs explained the action of indigeneity along the same emerging theme showed differences. I attempted to make sense of these differences, eventually arriving at two basic stances regarding their orientation to capitalist systems, applicable across dominant themes.

Two important inputs into the above process need special mention. First, I had lived in the area of this study for many years, and was familiar with the economic and socio-politic context of the region. I utilized this background knowledge to enable me to perform a non-mechanical analysis of interview data with a deep understanding of the context. The second input involved peer feedback obtained from two sources. One was through the presentation of an initial version of this work at a prominent international conference, which facilitated very useful suggestions. The other significant influence came from the peer review process of this paper, where specific suggestions in terms of relevant literature and directions for deeper data analysis were advanced. Throughout the process, I proceeded by alternating data analysis with further exploration of literature; this journey back and forth has considerably influenced the results of the analysis.

FINDINGS

The results of this study point to important ways in which entrepreneurs visualized the indigeneity of their enterprises. First, three broad dimensions emerged as key aspects of the multiple ways in which indigeneity was conceptualized and interpreted. The first concerned the legitimacy of the enterprises, the second pointed to their organization, and the third related to outcomes of entrepreneurial activity. Each of these broad dimensions was derived from dominant themes, which were in turn aggregated from lower order themes. I organize the following section utilizing the broad dimensions, and the dominant themes that constitute these dimensions which were inductively derived from data. In each of these, I point to how indigeneity is interpreted varyingly. On one hand, interpretations point to integration revealing images of alignment with the institutions and practices of the wider capitalist system. On the other hand, interpretations along the same dimensions point to resistance concerning the practices of capitalism revealing images of disjunction and local assertion. These are summarized in Table 1 and explained in the following sections.

Broad dimension	Dominant themes	Interpretation of indigeneity serving integration	Interpretation of indigeneity serving resistance
Legitimacy	Legitimacy attribution	Indigeneity as a necessary characteristic of the enterprise at the ownership level only.	Indigeneity as a necessary characteristic of the enterprise at all levels including owners, supervisors, and workers.
	Source of legitimacy	Indigeneity as a characteristic acquired through birth.	Indigeneity as a characteristic acquired through birth and local community membership.
Organization	Entrepreneur Control	Indigeneity as privileges that facilitate entrepreneur control.	Indigeneity as provisions that restrict entrepreneur control.
	External Network	Indigeneity as a channel that expedites desirable connections with external actors.	Indigeneity as a filter that prevents undesirable connections with external actors.
Outcomes	Economic outcomes	Indigeneity as a facilitator of wealth creation by and for entrepreneurs.	Indigeneity as a facilitator of wealth preservation within the community.
	Non-economic outcomes	Indigeneity as an indirect facilitator of non-economic outcomes.	Indigeneity as a direct facilitator of non-economic outcomes.
	Negative outcomes	Indigeneity as undefined tribal sensitivity to tackle negative outcomes.	Indigeneity as stronger application of traditional governance systems to tackle negative outcomes.

Table 1: Indigeneity serving both integration and resistance with regard to the capitalist system

It must be noted that both strands of interpretations assert the distinctiveness of the indigenous sector, and that integration does not signify total unification removing all distinctions. In the same way, resistance does not indicate a state of total cut-off from the surrounding capitalist system. Thus, these labels are used to indicate the predominant direction of the element under description, and how it is used to serve the aims of entrepreneurs by a positive orientation to integration or an active resistance to unrestrained integration.

ENTERPRISE LEGITIMACY

This dimension concerns how indigeneity acts to establish legitimacy of the enterprises in the particular context of special provisions and tribal rights. The issue of legitimacy is not unambiguously interpreted through the application of apparently long lasting legal provisions. However, there is great variation in the ways in which these provisions are interpreted.

Legitimacy attribution

The first dominant theme of legitimacy is related to the way in which indigeneity is attributed to the organization. When interpreted from the integrative perspective, indigeneity is infused into the enterprise through the tribal status of the owners. Employing outsiders in other positions enable clear advantages such as lower wages, and more control as they do not enjoy the same level of rights and social capital as local tribal people. Thus, the indigenous status of the owner becomes the necessary and sufficient condition for considering an enterprise as indigenous. This is especially true in extractive and construction industries where large number of laborers come from outside tribal areas:

> « Why should I not employ someone because he is an outsider? If he knows his job and work harder, why not? I am a businessman and in business we have to look at getting maximum output. We can't do the job of a non-profit organization. »(Contractor 1)

On the other hand, when interpreted from a resistance orientation, indigeneity is infused into all levels of the organization. Though challenging, often business imperatives make it necessary to employ only tribal people. This is the case of culturally oriented enterprises offering services associated with tourism, tribal food, fashion, etc. Here, employing local people becomes imperative as the demands of the market necessitate the provision of genuine and culturally authentic experiences for customers: "I can't put a non-Khasi person serving authentic tribal food. It will not look correct if I am aiming for special customers such as tourists" (Restaurant owner 1).

Source of legitimacy

The second dominant theme in this dimension concerns the source of legitimacy. In the integrative interpretation, legitimation occurs predominantly based on birth. Indigeneity in this way signifies belonging to the scheduled tribe category as demarcated by federal government rules. This status is acquired only by birth: "As it is now, one of the parents have to be tribal. One can get a tribal name only by birth. This is not a big problem for unscrupulous businessmen" (Urban shop owner 2).

The last sentence above refers to the existence of *benami* deals where the business right of a tribal person is illegally bought by a non-tribal individual who runs businesses in the name of the former. The claim of legitimacy by birth in these situations has become facilitative for investments by outsiders albeit without full legal sanction. Even when it is exercised in a legal way, this interpretation of indigenous legitimacy is aligned to integration as it does not put other conditions and frees the movement of tribal entrepreneurs across the economy.

However, from a resistance perspective, indigeneity is interpreted with the additional condition of community membership. Local village councils have imposed restrictions on fellow tribal people from elsewhere (most notably, urban areas) to buy land or businesses in these areas. This assertion points to a different interpretation of indigeneity of a more stringent and restrictive kind, to serve the aim of resistance, as individuals are unable to exercise their tribal rights without restriction:

« In our area, it is necessary to be a local to buy land. This is why people from Shillong [capital town] have not bought up large areas like in Bhoi [another area with different land rules]. This is the best thing that has happened to us. » (Hospitality enterprise 2)

Here, the importance of community life as a factor in defining oneself as an indigenous person is asserted. This is done against the backdrop of increasing gaps between the lifestyles of those who live in towns and those from rural communities.

ENTERPRISE ORGANIZATION

This dimension relates to issues concerning coordination of the enterprise, and synchronization and alignment with external market players. It is interpreted in ways that are both internal and external to the community. Internally, it focuses on the issue of entrepreneur control, and externally, it denotes the formation of alliances with external entities, as explained below.

Entrepreneur control

The first dominant theme concerns the locus of control in the enterprise. Here, from an integration perspective, indigeneity is interpreted to be something that enables better control of the entrepreneur over the enterprise. For example, regulations for land ownership privilege local tribal people. In recent times, these exclusive rights have been exercised more as absolute rights, enabling tribal entrepreneurs with advantage. This way of interpreting indigeneity is supported by the national institutions aligned with capitalism, such as banks: "If I need a bank loan for my business, I need the papers in my name. Otherwise the bank will not look at me. This is the reason why clan lands have to be registered in individual names" (Urban shop owner 3).

When interpreted in a distinctive way, indigeneity signifies a restriction of control of tribal entrepreneurs over their enterprises. In these situations, absolute legal rights are not accorded but individuals have only the right of use; which can be retracted by the community when the land is left fallow or other resources are not utilized as intended: "I have the land for cultivation. As long as the trees are there, it is mine. If they are cut, it belongs to the village" (Food dealer 4).

However, in recent times, with the acceleration of various types of commercial activities, these controls have not always been implemented. Vast areas of community land have been privatized, and the richer families have acquired these as they have better resources for their utilization. This has led to a situation where the integrative interpretation of indigeneity has become more conspicuous.

External network

The second theme relating to organization focuses on how external networks are formed for the activity of enterprising. When interpreted in an integrative way, community controls including the influence exercised by the village councils become facilitative in connecting local indigenous entrepreneurs to external businesses. This is achieved by pointing to the influence of the village councils in making important decisions regarding

commercial activities in their territories without the bureaucratic hurdles of the state machinery. Wealthy entrepreneurs are capable of influencing traditional governance systems, and—in the absence of a designated opposition in these councils—it is not difficult to facilitate desirable business connections in a fast and efficient manner: "You can see this with cement companies. They need to negotiate with only the village council. You will not have some people agreeing and others not agreeing. This system helps companies"(Coal trader 1).

On the other hand, many entrepreneurs pointed to the ability of tribal governance systems to keep out "undesirable" outsiders, and thus ensure the competitiveness of tribal enterprises through licenses that outsiders need to procure from traditional bodies: "Here, non-tribals need a trading license and no-objection certificate. Even with these conditions we have many outsiders. These controls and land ownership restrictions are the only things that prevent their influx to some degree" (Urban shop owner 1).

ENTERPRISE OUTCOMES

This dimension deals with how indigeneity is interpreted concerning outcomes of enterprising. These outcomes can be classified in two ways. The first division is based on whether the outcomes are economic or non-economic, such as social or ecological. The second division is based on whether outcomes are considered desirable or undesirable. In both ways, the integrative and resistance perspectives are evident, as explained in the three themes below.

Economic outcomes

The first dominant theme here is concerned with positive economic outcomes of enterprising. From an integration perspective, indigeneity favors wealth creation by individual entrepreneurs for their own advancement. Communities and collectives are not easily amenable to systems and practices associated with capitalism; and thus, increasing privatization becomes a chief mechanism through which an integrative mode of indigenous capitalism operates. Thus, businesses are increasingly privately owned and managed: "We are organized as tribes, and clans. But now, if you ask me, it is my family that counts. It is how much you earn for your family that makes a real difference" (Used clothes dealer 2).

However, when resistance is aimed, indigeneity is interpreted as a desirable barrier to the free flow of created wealth out of the community. The requirement of local community participation ensures that beneficiaries of activities in a village community are the members themselves. One of the interviewees asserted: "If the money does not stay in the village, there is no point in selling our wealth". To this end, there have been a few instances where village-based collectives or self-help groups have promoted entrepreneurial ventures. These represent an emerging sphere of indigenous entrepreneurship in the area oriented to resistance: "There is Mawlynnong (a village enterprise for tourism) and a few self-help groups...But businesses owned by villages….we must have them. It is in line with our culture" (Contractor 4).

Non-economic outcomes

The second dominant theme relates to how indigeneity relates to positive non-economic outcomes. When interpreted from an integrative perspective, economic objectives are predominant, and non-economic objectives are targeted only indirectly. Thus, economic empowerment of indigenous individuals becomes the primary outcome that needs to be pursued, as a strong focus on wealth creation is imagined to lead to non-economic outcomes at a later stage. This is alluded to when interviewees referred to increased economic influence of a new class of indigenous entrepreneurs who have subsequently acquired political power:

> « The place would have become another Tripura [a neighboring region where immigrants outnumber local tribal people] had we not asserted ourselves. Yes, I am not so proud that our rich are not thinking about us. But it is good that they have power. » (Urban shop owner 3)

This has to be understood in the context of a social situation in which commerce in the region was predominantly controlled by trading communities from elsewhere in India. The newfound affluence of a few individuals is extrapolated as the assertion of the tribe and the community. In practice, the "real value" created for a few individuals is extended to form a "symbolic value" for large number of indigenous people who are not able to enjoy economic benefits from these arrangements, but who feel compensated through social ties of tribe or clan.

In contrast to this, those highlighting a resistance perspective point to economic inequalities and the socio-political marginalization of a large number of indigenous people as the reasons for a different approach. Here, indigeneity in enterprising primarily is addressed to serve social or ecological objectives first: "Earlier we could find so many wild herbs in the market.[...] and special varieties of rice. These are not found now. We can't put a money value. We need to create a local market for this. Then, they survive" (Urban shop owner 2).

Negative outcomes

The third element in this dimension deals with undesirable outcomes of entrepreneurial activities. Increased activities in extractive industries have led to severe environmental damage. Adverse impacts have also been experienced by the marginal farmers who have suffered from the quality depletion of land and water. Gatherers of forest-produce have also been affected as shrinking forests have affected their incomes. Social changes as a result of increasing levels of inequality among indigenous people have aggravated these effects. In addition, the influx of non-tribal people seeking economic opportunities has affected the demographic equation in many places. Entrepreneurs showed keen awareness of these problems and talked about different approaches to deal with them. Those adopting an integrative perspective pointed to the inevitability of certain adverse effects and asserted their inherent ability as ecologically and socially conscious tribal people to deal with these problems. For example, concerning adverse environmental impact one of the interviewees said: "Some environmental impact is inevitable. But we are sensitive, more than others" (Contractor 2). Controls (especially those from external bodies)

were interpreted as a dilution of the special rights of tribal people, and they sought greater autonomy in managing adverse effects.

On the other hand, an approach oriented to resistance stressed that unspecified sensitivity cannot be recognized as reliable:

> « People will sell *"everything"* [emphasis]. Look at the women selling cinnamon bark [collected from the forest] at the view point for ten rupees. They don't care if the tree dies. They know no better. It is up to the village council to control it. » (Rural shop owner 3)

The solution was not envisaged as the greater interference of state and capitalist systems, but as the action of systems associated with pre-capitalist tribal governance. It was thus necessary to empower traditional institutions so that they could better control indigenous enterprises to ensure the minimization of undesirable outcomes. Although traditional governance is not fully democratic (e.g., there is an absence of women on many village councils) newer articulations are progressing toward a more democratic vision of traditional governance structures. However, this articulation also realizes that tradition can be appropriated by integrative forces; interviewees were careful to highlight an uncorrupt, egalitarian, and sometimes reformed version of tradition.

It is evident from the above discussion that the three dimensions and associated dominant themes are amenable to multiple interpretations of indigeneity. The same dimension of indigeneity can thus be used to serve both integration and resistance, demonstrating that what is important is not an essential meaning attached to indigeneity *per se*, but how its dimensions are used to achieve economic, social, cultural and ecological objectives through the creation and management of enterprises in the particular milieu. Recognizing this, we see how indigeneity becomes facilitative of integration with articulated social formations of capitalism, and at the same time acts toward resisting such an integration.

DISCUSSION

The results discussed above point to the usefulness of an articulation model for interpreting meanings concerning indigeneity. In this sense, we can situate meanings emerging from the two types of interpretations indicated above, at the intersection of the discourses/ structures of capitalism and pre-capitalist structures. This happens in a particular historical moment of post-colonial nation-building and global integration abetted by the forces of economic liberalization. The resultant contingent formations simultaneously feature both the powerful advance of capitalism and the resistance of indigenous actors. Hesketh (2016: 883) affirms that "ideas and local practices are transformed into resources for self-determination. Subaltern groups are neither fully autonomous nor fully subsumed to capitalism". Thus, indigenous people cannot be caricatured as merely engaging in unanimous and uncontested resistance to the forces of capitalist integration through collective struggles to preserve traditional elements engrained in indigenous enterprising. On the other hand, their agency cannot be reduced to the unquestioning embrace of an all-powerful capitalism. I detail below the dynamics of articulation that result in complex formations rather than the binary possibilities of pure resistance or total integration. In the sections below, key theoretical implications flowing from the results are explained first, followed by possible implications for practice.

CONCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS

The results indicate that privileging the notion of indigeneity with an apparent aim to promote indigenous enterprises as a separate category does not prevent it from being used for the opposite project of integration. It facilitates essentially capitalistic exchanges under the overarching garb of indigenous enterprising where tradition and difference are called upon to serve the greater project of integration. This is in line with earlier studies that point to the flexible spread of capitalism (Lindroth, 2014). Capitalist systems have the ability to take on various garbs and ensure their own spread by being flexible to a great degree. Capitalism in indigenous contexts can expand by packaging exploitative class-based relations that are essential to it under the garb of traditional social ties (Rata, 2011). In this way, the same pattern of indigenous construction employed by colonial administrators with the aim of expanding colonial interests is used currently to advance capitalism (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Li, 2010). Even when indigenous enterprises operate in a practically undifferentiated manner within the capitalist system, their assertion of difference using certain interpretations of indigeneity help expand capitalism under the false appearance of authentic distinction (Devlin, 2006). Thus, the integration project reveals the overarching influence of capitalism, as enterprising is done within its broad framework, utilizing inevitable relationships with various elements of capitalism.

On the other hand, the resistance project shows that in the expanding onslaught of capitalism, indigenous people at the periphery do have a degree of agency. Articulations that bring forth tribal systems and employ tribal sensibilities in the context of an advancing capitalism signal indigenous assertion and claim to existence in a world where such differences are increasingly being ignored. Indigenous people can and do use their indigeneity to advance selected elements of resistance. This is also in line with earlier studies that point to such agency from other contexts (Bunten, 2010; Valdivia, 2005).

Some of the complexities involved in this articulation of resistance can be understood by using, the conceptualization of a community's possible responses to the global economy (Anderson, et al., 2006). Two key choices that communities make while responding to imposed economic systems need to be considered. The first is the choice to opt in or out of the imposed system. The results of this study indicate that the predominant response was opting in to engage in varied ways with the overarching capitalist system. However, a second choice involves how the decision to opt in can be implemented in two ways, leading to a style of participation that is either active or passive.   A passive opting-in would indicate that the terms of the global economy are accepted as they are without questioning. An active opting-in would involve attempts to transform capitalist systems and practices in considerable ways to suit local priorities and cultural features (Anderson, et al., 2006). This study points to a third possibility where communities can combine the elements of active opting-in (integration) with active opting-out (resistance) simultaneously.

We can explain these contradictory projects by recognizing contestations that characterize articulated formations. Intra-tribal variations in interpretations of meanings as evident from the results of this study is an example of this. This internal differentiation is not often accepted or considered in discussions on indigenous entrepreneurship that adopt a monolithic understanding of indigenous communities. It has been shown that applying an undifferentiated notion of community has been

instrumental in the failure of many indigenous enterprises that were categorized as community-based (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010). In contrast to a uniform and harmonious image of the community, the current results show that internal differentiation gives rise to multiple voices within the community so that varied strategies can be pursued in the articulation of entrepreneurial formations by members of the same community. This study points to the usefulness of a differentiated idea of community facilitated by the notion of articulation.

In addition to the multiplicities indicated above, inconsistent action is also possible by a single actor in multiple contexts or aspects of enterprising. Entrepreneurs are not always neatly aligned with one stance or another but can vary between stances along different themes. Here, an articulation perspective recognizes how agency operates with structural constraints and historical contingencies. These complet conditions and imperatives for multidirectional action are exemplified in the agency of the state, which is itself not straight-forward. On one hand, it is key in enabling pro-capitalist arrangements: the state acts through multiple institutions of control and much of the legal provisions of the country are generally oriented to ensuring uniformity across regions. However, by upholding special provisions for tribal control of the enterprising project in certain settings, the state also provides elements aimed at resisting capitalist uniformity. Thus articulation happens at the intersection between the allocations of the state in two directions. While it encourages difference through special provisions, it also promotes embedding of the structures of capitalism, which constantly push these zones of difference to oblivion.

To make better sense of the above dynamics, it is helpful to focus on the performative role of indigeneity (Graham & Penny, 2014), as it is coupled with and decoupled from capitalism. In the integration approach, a particular version of indigeneity is being produced and enacted for the capitalist stage, with associated articulations of institutional formations. However, it is important to realize that the resistance approach also involves a similar enactment against the backdrop of a constructed tribal category, which is the result of articulations involving colonial administrators, the current nation state, and other external players associated with transnational indigenous formations. Viewed from this perspective, the question of indigenous authenticity becomes performative in nature (Srinivas, 2012). This is in line with the articulation perspective, which treats the question of authenticity as secondary, since "cultural forms will always be made, unmade, and remade[…]drawing selectively on remembered pasts" (Clifford, 2001: 79). With this focus on performativity, the results of this study prompt the conceptualization of indigeneity as a "performative tool", which helps indigenous people achieve multiple entrepreneurial outcomes. It must, however, be noted that these objectives themselves take shape deriving from a sense of purpose and contingent identity through this very enactment of indigeneity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The results and the discussion above indicate that indigeneity is enacted according to circumstance, jointly by the expanding power of capitalism and by the local agency of actors who selectively identify with its directions or pursue resistance in certain aspects. This has implications for various stakeholders in the setting.

For policy formulation and developmental interventions, this study indicates the necessity to develop more fine-grained contextual understanding and to pursue more targeted interventions for achieving

appropriate objectives. Just as entrepreneurship can be no panacea for indigenous emancipation, the operationalization of indigeneity itself is no guarantee that entrepreneurial formations are separated from capitalism. Thus, attempts to position indigenous enterprises as an alternative to capitalist formations are not likely to succeed unless more attention is paid to how exactly indigeneity and entrepreneurship are articulated to achieve resultant formations. If preservation of indigenous ways is attempted, these efforts need to be supported by the concerted action on multiple institutional structures, which scaffold such ways. Creating alternative systems for financial inclusion, enabling the operationalization of common property for community objectives, supporting the formation of tribal cooperatives, etc. are possible support actions, which could advance such policy objectives toward better realization.

From the perspective of communities, the simultaneous existence of both integration and resistance introduces a certain degree of uncertainty. This uncertainty implies both challenges and opportunities for communities. On one hand, it is challenging, as much work needs to be done within these communities to ensure processes that support the formulation and achievement of community objectives vis-à-vis enterprising. Democratic decision making invariably involves struggles for influence, and the voice of the collective or the disadvantaged individual can easily be drowned in a capitalist context, which favors individual economic assertion. Here, traditional institutions need to defend themselves to preserve traditional values and to interpret them appropriately in the new context. On the other hand, uncertainties can provide opportunities for assertion, as the articulation of contingent formations cannot always be controlled from the top in a unilateral way. Here, undesirable policy initiatives can be resisted through appropriate performances of indigeneity that enable communities to be proactive in deciding how enterprising could be imagined in locally relevant ways.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how entrepreneurs from designated indigenous groups interpret their indigeneity in the process of creating and managing their enterprises at the periphery of capitalism. Rather than a categorization approach, this research utilized a recognition of the contingent doing of indigeneity, focusing on interpretations of meanings in multiple ways. By situating this research in a strong indigenous setting at the periphery of a large and thriving capitalist economy, the study sought to bring out more clearly the dynamics of articulation in the effort of enterprising at the margins. Results show that in the expansive march of capitalism, indigenous players can be willing allies and active resisters simultaneously.   Driven by structural impulses and historical roots, indigeneity can function as a performative tool directed at entrepreneurial formations aligned with both integration and resistance.

This study examined indigeneity as evident in the project of enterprising in a particular context; it has various limitations. The adoption of a strong theoretical lens focused on articulation has mixed implications. While it has brought clarity to certain elements, other aspects might have been overlooked. Further, the methodology employed in this study could be complemented by more comprehensive approaches to participant identification and data collection. Moreover, my prior familiarity with the context might have negatively affected my analysis by introducing biases. However, being aware of this possibility, I took extra care to avoid it by questioning my interpretations and reflexively iterating the analysis.

This work can be carried forward through further investigations that explore the exact mechanisms in the action of indigeneity as it relates to capitalism. One important area of focus could be how institutional structures of capitalism interact with other structures, absorbing, modifying, or demolishing them in the process. As indicated at the beginning of this paper, there is a great deal of diversity between indigenous communities across the globe, and it would be interesting to explore how indigeneity operates with regard to enterprising in those contexts. Considering that there is a great deal of variety also in the way capitalism works across contexts, these explorations are likely to yield insights that carry forward this study in interesting ways.

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