

Extraction: Tracing the veins¹

A Virtual/nearly carbon neutral conference

Massey University, New Zealand and Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands

June 29 – July 10, 2020



Photo: Olivier Bacquet - OliBac (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=76070395>)

The global appetite for large-scale resource extraction is insatiable. Extraction is the basis for contemporary capitalism, and for almost every commodity we engage with, use and even consume in everyday life. Like minerals coursing through veins deep in the earth and connecting in ways unseen from the surface, extraction provides a direct link between people, economy and planet, with deeply embedded connections—material, ideological and political. Extractive industries are also responsible for half of the world’s carbon emissions and more than 80% of biodiversity loss. Now, as the environmental costs become harder to ignore, we are seeing new actions to contest and reshape extractivism, and to consider post-extractive futures. From a ban on offshore oil and gas exploration in Aotearoa NZ, to industry-led sustainable mining initiatives, and to strikes and protests against mining and oil developments through the Americas, Asia, Pacific and Africa, extraction (and activism towards it) is reshaping people’s relationships with state and market institutions, with the land and soil, and with each other.

Despite the centrality of extraction to contemporary life, Anthony Bebbington (2012) wrote a few years ago of ‘the relative invisibility of minerals, oil and gas in the canons of political ecology’. While the intervening years have seen important scholarship, the extractive industries, and processes of extractivism more broadly, continues to be a fertile space for further political ecology- driven

¹ Tracing the Veins is the title of a book by Janet Finn (1998). “Tracing the Veins: Of Copper, Culture, and Community from Butte to Chuquicamata”. Berkeley: University of California Press.

exploration. In order to re-examine extraction and its contested place in contemporary capitalism, this event calls on participants to take up the theme of Extraction, which we understand in multiple senses: extraction as the material extraction of natural resources; as a mode of accumulation central to the histories and continuation of capitalism; and as a worldview in which nature is a resource to be commodified for human consumption and accumulation. We encourage scholarly critique as well as engagement with the multiple movements that confront extraction and the communities that are practicing and imagining different systems based on regeneration.

In this nearly carbon neutral conference, we invite authors from a range of backgrounds and countries to present and collaborate virtually. The conference will take place over two weeks in June and July 2020. We welcome contributors who hail from a broad range of disciplines: sociologists, artists, engineers, environmental activists, geographers, development practitioners, biologists, economists, environmental managers, anthropologists, and industry representatives to name a few. We seek contributions that cross boundaries of social/natural sciences, and that connect local and global contextual analyses.

Papers are invited to address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- **Theorising extractivism.** Considering the environmental histories and ongoing colonial character of extractive industries; the historic and contemporary global flows and connections of resources and power. This may include: Social reproduction and extractivism; feminist political ecology of extraction; racism and ethnic identity formation in extractivist projects and processes; the financialization of commodities and extractivism; extractivism and climate change.
- **The future of extractive industries.** How are extractive industries changing and adapting to environmental, social, or competitive pressures; What are the possibilities for sustainable resource extraction?; of moving away from extractive industries?; do calls for the end of extractive industries ignore the imperial histories of these industries, their centrality to modern life (and indeed to the technologies by which this conference is possible) and the different potentialities that extraction produces – from the politics of resignation, to increasingly strident forms of nationalism, and discourses of (resource) curses.
- **New forms of extraction.** Beyond the traditional extractive industries, how do other forms of resource extraction – sand, intensive agriculture, deep sea mining, data mining, even ‘renewable’ resources - help us to re-theorise extractivism and its centrality to capitalist relations?
- **Confronting extractivism.** Movements by indigenous Peoples, environmental groups, peasants, workers, etc. that confront extractivism, both in terms of place-based projects, and the political economy and nature/society dualisms that legitimate extractive practices.
- **Creative responses to extraction.** How are artists, creative writers and activists responding to extraction? How is / can art challenge and subvert extractivism? We welcome creative presentations that work well on the online format, such as photography and art portfolios, short films, and creative writing.
- **Post-extraction and regenerative systems.** Can we live without extraction? What does a post-extractivist world look like? How are communities around the world protecting and/or building regenerative rather than extractive systems? How do different worldviews, including Māori and other indigenous perspectives on extraction, take us beyond a materialist discussion of post-extractivism to imagining and building alternatives?

Nearly carbon-neutral conference format

Traditional academic conferences are responsible for a considerable amount of carbon emissions, as presenters fly from around the world to present in a single location. This also incurs significant financial costs, which often precludes researchers from developing countries and postgraduate students from attending. The Environmental Humanities Initiative at UC Santa Barbara estimated that running an online conference reduces the carbon footprint of a conference by 99%, as well as broadening their reach and accessibility.

This conference will take place entirely online in June-July 2020. Contributors will not have to travel anywhere and there is no registration fee. Conference presentations will consist of material that can be submitted online as a video file. This could take the form of a webcam recording, an edited video, a PowerPoint or Prezi with recorded audio or another form of video. Each presentation should be no more than 20 minutes long. Instructions on creating and submitting presentations for the conference are online [here](#). For a sense of what this looks like in practice, please see previous conferences on “[The Lives and Afterlives of Plastic](#)” and “[The Feral](#)”. We also ask contributors to actively engage with questions and ideas that other attendees post on their presentation.

Abstract and panel submission instructions

If you are interested in presenting at the conference, please send a 250 word abstract with your name, e-mail address, and affiliation to masseyPERC@gmail.com by **Friday, March 6th 2020**. We also welcome proposals for panels and (digital) roundtable discussions, and we encourage innovative formats. If you would like to propose a panel, please send us a short panel rationale and details of panel participants.

After the conference, some contributors will be invited to develop their presentations for publication in an edited volume.

Conference Organisers

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Hosted by Massey University Political Ecology Research Centre (PERC)