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The Lives and Afterlives of Extraction: Resistance, Resilience, and Sustainability

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Extractive industries are at a critical juncture. The 2000s commodity super cycle led to a marked spatial expansion of extractive frontiers but also a diminishing availability of high-grade ore veins for key minerals with imminent peak production for other resources. The violence and undelivered promises of 'neo-extractivist' policies have been met by a growing focus on risk awareness and new corporate policies and practices seeking to enact community-based trust, legitimacy, and environmental justice. If extractive industries represent one of the main forces of dispossession and conflict and a driver of social and environmental damages on land, water, air and biodiversity, they are also of critical importance to a post-carbon and electric-powered future. Critics perceive this global shift towards principles of sustainability and responsibility as paradoxical, fraught, or inconsistent. Industry-led approaches to green extraction, community engagement, and a post-carbon future (see, e.g., Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020) as well as the creative responses of those bearing the brunt of extraction warrant further investigation.

Recent scholarship in anthropology (Ødegaard and Andía 2019, Ferry et al 2019), sociology (Alonso-Fradejas 2021), political ecology and human geography (Bridge 2010, Krause 2020), and development economics (Acosta 2016, Arboleda 2020) has paved the way for a relational and material understanding of natural resources directly implicating the human and social experience of extraction. This has been accompanied by an expanded notion of extractivism that seeks to encompass other value-extracting activities such as financialization or data mining, plantation agriculture and industrial forestry from across disciplines, including critical labor studies and political science (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019). These theoretical developments and expanded conceptions can inform urgent research on how extractivism and extractive industries may partake in the transition to more sustainable, just, and equitable societies. At the same time, research is needed on both the durability of corporate extractivism and the new forms of resistance it engenders.

This special issue takes stock of these transformations by opening a discussion that goes beyond optimistic and pessimistic visions for the future of mining, or the divide between the palliative risk reduction and the potentially oxymoronic solution of sustainable extraction. Reflecting on these debates, and the growing public scrutiny and policy intervention that energy and extractive industries have been subject to, this special issue of *International Development Policy* mobilizes and brings attention to innovative solutions and creative alternatives to longstanding problems in

the extractive sector, from formalization, local community participation, gender inequality, resource management, value transfers and North-South natural wealth distribution. At the same time, the special issue responds to ongoing calls to re-think the notion of “extractivism” (Szeman and Wenzel 2021) by studying the nature of extraction in multiple contexts and through multiple disciplinary lenses, taking heed of the gendered and lived experience of local communities, indigenous peoples, and workers.

Contributions will address some of the following questions:

- Is it possible to conceive a sustainable development project in the extractive sector?
- Is the move toward responsible extraction accompanied by a new politics of resistance?
- Can extraction ensure economic development in poverty-stricken contexts and the Global South more broadly?
- Can extractivism be “moderate” in a way that centers communities and workers to alleviate poverty? Are different modes of extractivism possible within current structures of production and accumulation? Can extraction be decolonized?
- Are the paradoxes of green extractivism, including the growing reliance on strategic resources such as lithium, cobalt or other rare-earth elements, an inevitable outcome of the energy transition?
- How to reconcile the strengthening of local communities and environmental justice with new trade agreements, development models, and capital logics that foster continued extraction?
- How to scale-up and mobilize experiences of resilience, resistance and activism to inform new models and standards of extraction?

Potential themes covered in the Special Issue:

- Intersections of race and ethnicity, gender, and class in and around sites of extraction;
- Cooperative models, labor organization, formalization of small-scale mining;
- Indigenous and local participation, informed consent, and social license to operate;
- The commons, *buen vivir*, and post-extractivism;
- Financial, environmental and reputational risks;
- Resistance to - and resilience of - different modes of extractivism;
- Temporalities of extraction (recycling, disposability, sustainability, etc.);
- Corporate sustainability and/as governance;
- Sustainable supply chains and their paradoxes;
- Green extractivism and sustainable development;
- Anti-consumption, degrowth strategies, and value redistribution;
- Technologies of extraction and extractivism.

Timeline:

15th April 2021: Abstract submission deadline (Submit abstracts and a brief bio to one of the guest editors and devpol@graduateinstitute.ch with the subject “extractivism special issue.”)

May 2021: Notification of acceptance

1 October 2021: First drafts due

Fall 2021: Workshop: “Authors meet Critics”

Spring 2022: Final drafts due

Fall 2022: Publication (print volume by Brill publisher and Open Access ebook).

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