Mining Encounters

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Extractive Industries in an Overheated World

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INTRODUCTION

Whereas the extraction of raw materials has been a human concern in all times, certain periods are more intense than others in this respect. Today's world definitely finds itself in the middle of such a period, with 'resource booms' and 'busts', taking place in all continents; new extraction sites are developed, closed mines are being reopened, foreign investors compete for leases, millions of people are engaged in artisanal and small-scale mining, and the global trade in resources such as coal, copper and iron ore has grown enormously since the turn of the millennium, not least due to China's industrial development and its quest for resources (see, for example, Brautigam 2009; Alder et al. 2009). In the case of Africa, Bryceson and Jønsson (2014: 3–5) even identify the current 'era of mineralisation' as one of the continent's three major mining eras of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, following an era of 'apartheid mining in Southern Africa' and of 'conflict mineral mining'. And indeed, human extraction and consumption of mineral resources have increased steadily since the Industrial Revolution, but never as fast as today.

Within the context of the current expansion of the extractive sector, questions related to unequal economic growth, the local distribution of benefits, development, global commodity chains, taxation, sustainability, livelihoods issues, local resistance and climate change, among others, are becoming more and more pertinent for an understanding of resource extraction's multiple effects. After all, the extractive sector (involving both large-scale industrial as well as small-scale artisanal operations) has the allure, capital and power to trigger changes across societal domains: it attracts large numbers of people, either searching for employment in industrial operations or engaging in artisanal mining; it requires, shifts and generates capital, and may contribute to local economic development through spill-over effects; it brings together a variety of stakeholders with different and sometimes opposing interests;

it turns over soil and impacts upon global as well as local socioeconomic, political and ecological systems in sometimes very dramatic ways. Due to the nature of the extractive sector, the kinds of accelerated change it triggers can often be characterised as veering between bringing about positive development by creating jobs, improving infrastructure or providing national income through taxation, and prompting crisis through land acquisitions and privatisation, displacement, exploitation or environmental destruction. This double-sided character of the effects of resource extraction emphasises that resource extraction is indeed 'contentious and ambiguous' (Bebbington et al. 2008). Moreover, at first sight it seems to correspond well to the two dominant categories in which resource extraction has often been placed: those approaches that propagate resource extraction as a blessing and those that qualify extraction as a 'curse'[1] (Gamu et al. 2015). Nonetheless, whereas extraction's effects are perhaps double-sided, they do not necessarily pose a question of either/or. On the contrary, as Pijpers (2018) argues elsewhere, while being constantly renegotiated by different combinations of actors, the effects of resource extraction, and the rapid changes it may trigger, are fluid and multifaceted, simultaneously accommodating both positive and negative dynamics. A crucial question is, therefore, how different actors position themselves vis-à-vis each other and negotiate the multiplicity of potential effects of resource extraction.

Just as the extractive sector is expanding, so is the interest among social scientists in the implications of this expansion. While being rooted in a long and rich tradition, the recent growth in studies and publications on resource extraction (we will turn to several of them shortly), indicates that this is not only an increasingly important field of study but also that there is considerable ongoing concern to seek a better understanding of extractive practices and their social, economic, political and environmental effects around the world. Consequently, this volume seeks to contribute to this research agenda and to further our understanding of the extractive sector. It does so by centralising the numerous '*mining encounters*' through which the multiple edges of resource extraction are negotiated.

Mining encounters, as we see it, can be understood as the negotiations and frictions between individuals and groups with different agendas, worldviews and aims within the context of mining operations, from the early stages of exploration and development to the final phases of closure and aftermath. By taking up this approach, we are looking at extractive practices as fields of connection and negotiation, of frictions and contradictions, between different actors who have a particular interest in extraction. This allows us to focus better on how the multifaceted effects

of resource extraction, referred to above, are constantly (re)negotiated in a field consisting of a disparate variety of actors. This approach directly implies a perspective that does not limit itself to definite impact, that is, to binary assumptions regarding the effects of extraction, but takes a more dialectical and multifaceted approach, thereby giving voice to all actors in specific landscapes of resource extraction, whether these are powerful and visible or marginal and hidden. *Mining encounters*, which bring together different scales of operation, resources (including oil and gas) and life worlds, enable an approach that scrutinises processes of negotiation through the study of specific events, people and discourse, while connecting them to larger-scale processes.

The perspective cultivated here thus takes the global analysis of the resource industry as a premise, but has its substantial focus on the *mining encounters* best studied ethnographically by anthropologists. In doing so, our perspective situates resource extraction in the particular sets of histories and social, political and economic relations of specific localities (Gilberthorpe and Rajak 2017) – an approach which corresponds with and builds upon that of the anthropology of resource extraction more broadly (see, for example, Ferguson 1999; Luning 2012; Geenen 2015; Welker 2014; Weszkalnys 2016; Leonard 2016; Golub 2014; Rajak 2011; Kirsch 2014; Luning and Pijpers 2017). The *mining encounters* studied in this volume, all unfold in, or generate, spaces of accelerated change; spaces where power relations are destabilised, new livelihood activities develop, existing livelihoods are challenged, new inequalities are created and the lure of fast money in large quantities is omnipresent. Frequently, these spaces and the processes unfolding within them are marked by tension, friction and 'overheating' (Eriksen 2016), which is another central concern of this volume. Before discussing the idea of overheating and why it is especially pertinent in an exploration of resource extraction, however, we will first elaborate on some aspects of the study of extractive practices in more detail.

STUDYING MINING: TOWARDS COHABITATION

'Despite its antiquity, the miner, like Geertz's peasant, was recently discovered by anthropologists,' writes Richard Godoy (1985: 199) in 'Mining: Anthropological Perspectives'. Although anthropological studies of mining came, apparently, relatively late in the development of the discipline, they were certainly timely, with the energy and environmental crisis of the 1970s and 1980s making people more aware of the finite supply of resources and limits to industrial growth (Godoy 1985; Meadows et al. 1972). These earlier studies of mining often focused on

the economics of mining, its ecological and economic impact, mining communities, colonial mining projects, rituals and ideologies, migration patterns and industrial and social transformations. Naturally, several of these studies became well known and laid a solid foundation for contemporary work on natural resources, not least with regard to the effects of the arrival and establishment of (foreign) mining operations.

The works of June Nash and Michael Taussig, for example, both deal with Bolivian tin miners and their integration in a global capitalist economy. In *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* (1979), Nash studies processes of cultural transformation among Bolivian tin miners, arguing that 'they have transformed themselves from a peasant population with a localised world view to a proletariat aware of the world market in which the product of their labour is sold and from which they buy many of their consumption needs' (1979: 2). Nash shows how the reproduction of a big part of miners' pre-conquest identity, including particular traditional values and beliefs, has strengthened workers' solidarity. Taussig, also concerned with the effect of Bolivia's increasing (if unequal) incorporation in the global market in *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980), focuses on how the devil signifies people's social experience of alienation in an emerging capitalist mining society. Across the Atlantic, Raymond Dumett (1998), who was also interested in the role of the penetration of foreign mining capital, studied the gold frontier in Ghana, illustrating how foreign companies and locals engaged in dynamic interactions in pushing the mining frontier in a country which had long been engaged in the extraction of gold.[2]

Yet, perhaps the most significant body of earlier work dealing with the role of foreign mining operations in generating local processes of change is the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute,[3] later the 'Manchester School', especially those focusing on the Copperbelt in former Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Many of these studies (see for example, Wilson 1941; Epstein 1958; Mitchell 1956; Gluckman 1961) examined the transformative power of industrial development and the wide range of dynamics of social change it spurred, thereby particularly emphasising the transition from a tribal/rural to a modern/urban mode (Falk Moore 1994: 50–1). Social change, it transpired from these studies, was considered to be embedded in processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and the development of new class structures and lifestyles, which were predominantly associated with the establishment and expansion of large-scale mining projects. This strong emphasis on change, and especially the transformative role of industrial mining in these processes, was later critiqued, for example by Ferguson (1999: 24), who characterised this area as the 'anthropological topos for the ideas of

"social change" and "urbanisation"', and by Gewald (2009), who shows that the processes of change in the Copperbelt were also rooted in longer histories of mobility. Especially the argument of Gewald (2009) shows that the effects of mining are produced in dialogue with wider social, economic, political and historical dynamics, a perspective that is also central in this volume on *mining encounters*.

Since Godoy's 1985 review of anthropological studies on mining, academic interest in natural resources and their extraction has, as we indicated earlier, expanded and diversified. Acknowledging the multiple aspects of resource extraction, and their role in spurring the diverse effects of extraction, social scientists have turned more and more to the role of, for example, corporate social responsibility (Dolan and Rajak 2016; Rajak 2006), materiality (Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014), creation of identities (Welker 2014; Golub 2014), temporality (Ferry and Limbert 2008; Halvaksz 2008; D'Angelo and Pijpers 2018), resistance to mining projects (Kirsch 2014; Coumans 2011), gender (Lahiri-Dutt 2015), global geopolitics and national political discourse (Mitchell 2011; Batty 2013; Emel et al. 2011) and governance of space (Appel 2012; Ferguson 2005). In doing so, these studies show that resources and their extraction – whether this concerns gold, oil, diamonds, copper or gas – are embedded in a complex social, economic and political field. This field, which is thus crucial for our understanding of the dynamics of global resource extraction, connects specific extractive practices to a multitude of local, national, regional and global phenomena, including developments on the global commodity market, local histories of extraction, policy frameworks by continental and global institutions, local land-use practices and national development agendas.

In addition to the diverse studies on resource extraction mentioned above, one field of study that has attracted considerable academic attention is that of artisanal and small-scale mining, a development predicted by Godoy in 1985. Whereas the focus had predominantly been on situations in which large-scale, industrialised mining occurred (see the examples above, with the exception of Dumett), the dynamics of small-scale mining were given less prominent attention.[4] Yet, artisanal mining was in fact the sphere in which Godoy's antique miner operated. After all, artisanal mining has been an important part of pre-industrial economies all around the world: gold was extensively mined in the Ashanti kingdom for the production of, for example, ornaments and decorations; in Sub-Saharan Africa, extensive trading networks existed based on an exchange of gold from West Africa with salt from the Sahel region; in South East Asia, mining of copper, gold and silver served the production of Buddhas and utensils for the royal families; and the golden

wealth and the metallurgical skills of the Aztecs continue to speak to the world's contemporary imagination of these ancient societies. Naturally, artisanal mining is not only an historical fact, but is of crucial importance to the lives of many people in the contemporary world. In 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated, for example, that approximately 13 million people were *directly* engaged in artisanal and small-scale mining globally, with the number of those indirectly engaged being many times higher (estimated between 80 million and 100 million). Nowadays, this number is significantly higher, given that already, in the case of gold mining alone, 16 million people directly depend on artisanal and small-scale extraction (Seccatore et al. 2014).

Not surprisingly, given its importance, attention to artisanal and small-scale mining has become substantial (as has the study of extraction in the social sciences in general), covering topics such as mining technologies (Verbrugge and van Wolputte 2015; Arnaldi di Balme and Lanzano 2016), the role of women and gender (Graulau 2001; Werthmann 2009), local imaginaries of the underground (D'Angelo 2014), mobility and migration patterns (de Theije 2014), policy regulations and conflict (Verbrugge 2015), miners' social networks (Walsh 2008; Grätz 2009) and environmental pollution (Veiga and Hinton 2002; Hilson and Monhemius 2006). In addition, also in questions concerning 'development' and poverty alleviation, the role of artisanal mining has been thoroughly analysed and taken up in policy debates (see for example ILO 1999; Hentschel et al. 2003; UN Economic and Social Council 1996). Another significant perspective that has become incorporated in studying artisanal mining is its relation and interaction with other land users, including large-scale industrial miners (Hilson 2002; Aubynn 2009; Luning and Pijpers 2017). This development reflects, among other things, a general trend in studies of mining environments, that is, the increasingly diversified understanding of which actors combine to form what is understood as the mining community.

The Mining Community and Negotiating Cohabitation

Although the idea of the mining community was initially limited to a binary relation between states and companies, as Ballard and Banks (2003) point out, the incorporation of local communities as key players in resource extraction (through the institutionalisation of impact assessments to be conducted by large-scale companies, see Vanclay and Bronstein 1995; O'Faircheallagh 1999) gave rise to a three-legged or triad stakeholder model, consisting of the three central categories of state, corporation and community (Howitt et al. 1996). However,

these three categories did not allow for detailed analysis of the complex dynamics that develop in spaces of resource extraction (Clark and Clark 1999) and the concept of the 'mining community' had to be further differentiated, for example by the incorporation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), characterised as the 'fourth estate', and different agents affiliated to the three principal stakeholder categories (Ballard and Banks 2003: 304), in addition to the aforementioned artisanal mining communities. This expanding and diversified notion of the mining community is not surprising, considering the increased speed with which mining operations develop and the accumulating awareness of extraction's integration into wider social, economic and political dynamics. Moreover, as Ballard and Banks rightly note, 'as a sense of this broader mining community has developed, so too is there an increasing awareness of the internal complexity of what had previously been considered the monolithic entities of community, state, and corporation' (2003: 289). The work of Rajak (2011), which explores the mechanisms of corporate social responsibility and how it is used to accumulate and exercise power, and Welker (2014: 2), who shows how people 'enact corporations in multiple ways, and that these enactments involve struggles over the boundaries, interests, and responsibilities of the corporation', are excellent examples of this increasing awareness.

With the differentiation of different kinds of actors in the mining community, who often have conflicting interests, as well as their internal complexities, more and more attention is also dedicated to how processes of negotiation, for example over access to and control of resources, give shape to the establishment of forms of cohabitation, which can be understood as the ways in which different stakeholders work out ways of cohabiting in a mining area (Panella 2010). Hardin (2011), for example, develops the concept 'concessionary politics' in analysing Central African forest management, especially the competition between conservation and logging practices. This perspective illuminates how 'social and territorial struggles for control of natural resources, labour and knowledge' (Hardin 2011: S115) unfold in the 'microcosm of the logging or mining town' and 'unites widely disparate actors on intimate if unequal terms' (2011: S119). Similarly, the work of Geenen (2016), who analyses gold mining governance practices in Ghana, uses the idea of hybrid governance (one which resonates with Hardin's work), in order to show that negotiations between different groups (she focuses on companies, local and central government, and communities) constantly shift, thereby including or excluding different groups of actors at different points in time. Correspondingly, Luning (2012) details how neoliberal gold exploration in Burkina Faso affects 'relationships among stakehold-

ers, and how stakeholders value, define and redefine their identities' (2012: 25), showing how interactions between an international exploration company and a local earth-priest in Burkina Faso are embedded in a wider field of customary and modern authorities. This field, Luning demonstrates, is marked by contestation, which the company capitalises on by, for example, replacing 'one authority with another as *the* representative of the local community' (2012: 35; italics in original).

In negotiating forms of cohabitation we thus see how different actors position and reposition themselves within the mining community in order to safeguard their interests. Consequently, the focus on cohabitation and on its foundational negotiation processes in particular, provides an opportunity to see mining operations beyond the 'impact' of mining and a binary approach to either positive or negative effects. Instead, it enables a more nuanced perspective on processes of change within mining environments and acknowledges the agency of different stakeholders, while being sensitive to their power differences. Subsequently, the way in which these processes are given shape can be fruitfully studied by a focus on mining encounters, as exemplified in this volume. After all, these encounters – which may involve staff of mining corporations, local entrepreneurs, artisanal miners, farmers, politicians, civil servants, NGOs and various (members of) local communities – are instances in which processes of cohabitation are negotiated and given shape, and through which the entanglement of local life worlds and global developments in spaces of resource extraction are made visible.

Besides building upon the rich bodies of literature on resource extraction, to which we have referred, our approach also takes significant inspiration from Faier and Rofel's (2014) analysis of what they call 'ethnographies of encounter'. These ethnographies, Faier and Rofel argue (2014: 364) consider how 'culture making occurs through everyday encounters among members of two or more groups with different cultural backgrounds and unequally positioned stakes in their relationships'. Moreover, the notion of encounter, brings 'attention to the interactive and unequal dynamics of power that shape culture making across relationships of difference' (2014: 364). In the case of transnational capitalism, which is one of the main domains in which Faier and Rofel observe an encounters approach, these approaches emphasise 'contingency, unexpected outcomes, and articulations of multiple practices that make capitalism an ongoing process of creation and destruction rather than a singular, deterministic structure' (2014: 378). Translating this to a context of resource extraction, habitually marked by (trans)national capitalism, we observe that it is through the multiple encounters between actors – with unequal power positions and different agendas, worldviews

and aims – that resource extraction projects, and their disparate effects, are negotiated, produced and eventually materialise.

ACCELERATED CHANGE SEEN AS OVERHEATING

Not coincidentally, given the (often) conflicting agendas of those actors involved, and the considerable effects of resource extraction on people, the economy and the environment, mining encounters are habitually marked by friction and may result in forms of 'overheating', a phenomenon described as 'unevenly paced change where exogenous and endogenous factors combine to lead to instability, uncertainty and unintended consequences in a broad range of institutions and practices, and contribute to a widely shared feeling of powerlessness and alienation' (Eriksen 2016: 16).

Overheating is not a phenomenon exclusively associated with resource extraction, although this activity does bring together a number of overheating phenomena. Overheating is a far more comprehensive phenomenon, identifiable in many areas, from transportation to media consumption. Across the world, there is a widespread feeling that we humans live in a time of transition, although there is no general agreement, among social scientists or others, as to what kind of transition we are currently experiencing. And, not least, there is no general agreement about to whom attributions of responsibility or blame for the changes should be addressed, and what should be done about their consequences. This is not just about climate change, although that is arguably the most momentous and consequential change humanity is facing unless we change course: it goes without saying that resource extraction is linked with climate change.

Accelerated change can be identified in a number of areas. There are more of us, and each of us is on the average more mobile and active, and has more connections with others – is hooked up to more networks – than ever before. Earlier eras were, without exception, slower eras for the majority of humanity. In this sense, we presently live on an overheated planet. In physics, heat is closely connected to speed, and translated into the language of social science, overheating can be glossed as accelerated change. Moreover, it has long been recognised that the changes brought about by modernity have unintended, often paradoxical consequences, and when changes accelerate, so do the unintentional side effects of changes.

The most striking graphic representation of the processes of change characteristic of the current era is the exponential growth curve (Eriksen 2001). In its most familiar version, it depicts world population growth,

brought to the attention of policy makers not least through the Club of Rome's commissioned report *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), which advocated population control and reduced consumption as two of several methods for preventing serious resource scarcity in the future. From a global environmental perspective, the concern expressed by the Club of Rome is easily understandable. From the time we were anatomically modern, it took *homo sapiens* about 200,000 years to reach a population of 1 billion around the year 1800. It subsequently took only a little over 100 years to reach the second billion (achieved in 1920) and less than another 100 years to increase world population from 2 billion to 7 billion. It does not seem likely that it is ecologically and economically feasible to offer those 7 billion people (and global population has not yet peaked) material security and a way of life compatible with the promises of consumerism. Quite the contrary, the scenarios described by activists, politicians and planners include acceptance of widespread poverty, bracing for an ecological catastrophe, promoting population reduction, and/or replacing consumerism with one or several alternative models for the good life.

At the same time, in spite of temporary downturns and slowdowns (including those that are characteristic of the boom and bust cycles of the extractive industries), growth remains near-exponential in a number of realms, and population is not growing nearly as fast as a number of other phenomena. It is trivially true that the proportion of the world's population with access to the internet has grown extremely fast since 1990, since only a few million used the embryonic internet at the time. But even the rapid growth of the online world has accelerated since the turn of the century. As late as 2006, it was estimated that between 1 and 2 per cent of the Sub-Saharan African population (with the exception of South Africa) had reasonably regular access to the internet. By 2015, the proportion was estimated at over 20 per cent (Internet World Stats 2016). The simple explanation is that millions of Africans now have smartphones (which contain numerous mineral resources), with easy access to the web and email.

Numerous other examples could be given to illustrate the processes of change that unfold at a global scale: transnational migration in areas which 'feel the heat' of heightened mobility; the sharply upward pointing growth curve of websites, international organisations (as well as international conferences and workshops), mobile telephones, TV sets, private cars and text messages and the rapid emergence of Facebook (from non-existence in 2003 to about 1.1 billion user accounts ten years later). Or take the enormous increase in energy consumption: In 1820, each of us used, on an average, 20 Gigajoules (GJ) a year. Roughly