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Situating extraction in capitalism: Blueprints, frontier projects, and life-making

Emma Lochery

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Liège, Belgium

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ABSTRACT

“Mining (in) Capitalism” considers struggles over large-scale mining projects amid the multi-scalar politics of capitalism, bringing together articles analysing the articulation of national sovereignty over resources, protests over land, jobs and development projects, and individual and collective projects of life-making. This introductory article provides conceptual context, situating the collection within a discussion of what Nancy Fraser (2014) terms an “expanded conception” of capitalism, one that pays attention to multiple hidden abodes of “non-economic” processes and recognizes long-lasting legacies of variegated histories of extraction. The article begins by reviewing shifts in transnationally promoted blueprints for governing mineral extraction. It traces how, while mining projects power capitalism, they undermine its conditions of possibility, provoking struggles and requiring work to maintain extraction. Secondly, it calls for a contextualization of extractivist geographies of frontiers and enclaves that pays attention to older and intersecting projects of confiscation, domination, exploitation and neglect. Thirdly, it argues that such contextualization opens avenues for understanding diverse life projects and lived contradictions in the shadow of extraction. Contextualizing extraction within an expanded conception of capitalism helps illuminate the planetary politics that drive extraction while emphasizing place-specific trajectories of corporate power, distributive projects, protest and accommodation.

1. Introduction: Contextualizing extraction

With their deep shafts, vast pits, slag heaps and dumps, mining projects viscerally manifest the destructive and creative power of capitalism. Growing alarm over the climate crisis and widespread environmental degradation has not changed the fact that extractive industries remain central to powering economies and societies. They sit at the heart of capitalist enterprise, a foundational act of “double-alchemy” as “raw geology is liquidated into energy and money”, creating flows of wealth and waste (Bridge, 2015). These flows may be reconfigured by attempts to replace fossil fuel with green energy, but they will not cease in the foreseeable future; mining and extraction remain central to the “green” plans of many countries (Jerez et al., 2021; Verweijen and Dunlap, 2021; Voskoboynik and Andreucci, 2021).

This special section considers the profound entanglement of extractive projects with wider capitalist projects, bringing together articles analysing a variety of political struggles over extraction amidst capitalism as an “institutionalized social order” (Fraser, 2017) that articulates differently across time and space. The articles trace struggles around industrial-scale mining projects at a variety of scales, from

national-level discussions about the articulation of sovereignty over resources, local protests over land, jobs and development projects, to individual and family projects of self-making. They engage with literature in anthropology, geography and cognate disciplines that, especially since the boom in mining investment at the turn of the century and the subsequent commodity “supercycle”, has analysed the continued expansion of large-scale mining in the Global South, consequences of neoliberalization, and the profoundly unequal geographies of resource production and consumption (Ballard and Banks, 2003; Bridge, 2004; Bebbington et al., 2008; Kirsch, 2014; Phelps et al., 2015; Conde, 2017; Frederiksen and Himley, 2020; D’Angelo and Pijpers, 2022).

Together, the collection emphasizes that mining projects are dependent on wider “conditions of possibility” that enable capitalism more broadly: historical layers of exploitation and dispossession, the national and international legal coding of capital, and states’ claims to represent the public good and control the legitimate use of force (Fraser, 2014, 2017; Emel et al., 2011). Secondly, it demonstrates how mining projects are assembled amid capitalism, “co-produced” by actors inside and outside mining companies amid profoundly asymmetric power relations. Their assemblage relies on multiple government techniques; it

E-mail addresses: elochery@uliege.be, emma.lochery@gmail.com.

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demands continual work and investment from a range of actors at different geographical scales. Mining projects, and the government techniques they involve, are “caught in different power constellations and timescapes” of capitalism (Rubbers, 2021, pp. 7–8; Bear, 2015; Bear et al., 2015; Le Billon and Somerville, 2017; Li, 2007a).

Recognizing the entanglement of mining projects with wider, historically constituted political orders has implications for how we model the politics of mining capital, the spatiality of mining projects, as well as mining projects’ impact on processes of life- and subject-making. Recent work has enriched our understanding of companies’ multi-scalar role in governance, tracing how they have invested in reshaping the modalities of their engagement with local, national, and transnational governance, and the range of violent and “quieter” tactics they employ to manage protest and project themselves as moral corporate citizens (Frederiksen and Himley, 2020; Himley, 2013; Rajak, 2011; Benson and Kirsch, 2010; Welker, 2014; Verweijen and Dunlap, 2021). However, mining companies are not the only actors involved in this struggle over the wider normative topography and social imagination of mining. The case studies in this issue pay attention to how extractive projects are framed, appropriated, and resisted by a multiplicity of actors, examining how the (re)discovery of minerals, promises of investment, and the work of mining companies all enter into political struggles on multiple scales. Mining projects do not work in isolation. They are integral to wider political assemblages—projects of statehood, empire-building, national and subnational economies, and transnational relationships of trade, finance, and migration (Klinger, 2017; Riofrancos, 2017).

This introductory article provides a wider conceptual context to the case studies discussed in the articles. In situating mining projects within wider political assemblages, I engage with Fraser’s (2014, 2017) “expanded conception of capitalism”, which understands capitalism as an institutionalized social order in which production and exchange are enabled by “non-economic” conditions of possibility. She builds on scholarship showing how past and present processes of expropriation, dispossession, oppression, and “inclusionary control” (Verweijen and Dunlap, 2021) enable capitalist extraction (Marx, 1981; Hall, 1980; Harvey, 2003). At the same time, she maps “further hidden abodes”, beyond the exploitation of labour in production, that enable capitalism: social reproduction, the use of nature as an input and waste dump, and the establishment of a system of law by public powers. Capitalism depends on these processes, but its “orientation to endless accumulation threatens to destabilize these very conditions of its possibility” (Fraser 2017: 157). Beyond Fraser’s emphasis on capitalism’s background conditions and tendency towards crisis, I borrow from scholarship arguing that capitalist extraction depends on constituting an outside (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2019). The limits and boundaries of what is deemed outside or other become crucial to the function of capital, as spaces to be enclosed and reordered in the quest for extraction. Rather than a literal outside, it is the process of othering and categorizing, mapping divisions and divides, that is a central feature of a wider capitalist system—or “capitalist world ecology”, to borrow from Moore (2015).

This introduction explores three ways to contextualize extraction amidst wider power constellations and timescapes of global capitalism. Firstly, I focus on how extractive industries simultaneously power capitalism and undermine the conditions of its possibility—their operations revealing the power but also the “constructedness” and “palpable fragility” of capitalism (Fraser, 2017; Tsing, 2000). This fragility requires constant management focused on “making, translating, suturing, converting and linking diverse capitalist projects” (Bear et al., 2015). I address the work that goes into maintaining extraction through the production of policies, templates and tools on a transnational scale—what Caramento in this issue terms “blueprints” for governing mineral extraction. The patterns of confiscation, expropriation and exploitation central to capital’s search for surplus provoke conflict and struggle; in response mining companies have worked with governments and international organizations to manage, redirect, and repress protest. The

work to protect and expand capitalist extraction has involved varied reforms aimed at redistributing mining rents and projecting companies as not just economic but moral actors committed to sustainable development.

The second section of this introduction considers the spatiality of mining projects, focusing on two terms central to depictions of the geography of capitalist extraction since the neoliberal turn: the frontier and the enclave. Unpacking these two concepts demonstrates the work that goes into linking sites of present or future extraction to national projects and global markets; mining projects are justified in the name of the greater good and “abstracted” from their social and spatial contexts (McAfee, 1999). As the articles demonstrate, the work of making frontiers and enclaves today does not literally incorporate territories previously “outside” capitalism. Rather, mining projects are assembled in historically constituted terrains shaped by past and present capitalist projects and practices of forced and wage labour, commoditization and dispossession. The politics of mining projects are refracted through that history and myriad projects of government, placemaking and individual and collective personhood.

The third section asks how contextualizing mining projects amid wider power constellations and timescapes of capitalism affects the conceptualization of life-making and self-making in the shadow of extraction. The articles in the special section describe how a variety of actors inhabit, endure, manage, and critique tensions inherent to mining and related struggles over social reproduction, the annexation of nature, and governance and regulation. They recount experiences and testimonies of those subject to domination through exploitation and expropriation amid terrains shaped by past and present capitalist investment. Subject-making is profoundly contextual, contingent, and unstable. People tap into historical narratives, draw on varied grammars of obligation and expectation, and appropriate the claims of mining companies, governments, and other authorities and organizations. The collection reiterates that subjects are “neither fully determined by power nor fully determining of power” (Butler, 1997, p. 17).

Through the three sections of this introductory article, I draw on the individual articles in the special section. They discuss geographically diverse cases, combining ethnography with analyses of the political economy of mining. In the first article, Levacher and Le Meur analyse shifting ideas and models of compensation for impacts of nickel mining in New Caledonia. Caramento then analyses the trajectories of Zambian mine suppliers and service providers and patterns of capital accumulation following the privatization of the Zambian state mining parastatal. Mwanza and Bowman present an overview of mine-community conflict in South Africa’s rural platinum belt following the introduction of redistributive legislation. Asebe Regassa analyses the interplay between Ethiopia’s macro-political order and the dynamics of protest and repression around a gold mine in southern Ethiopia. Finally, Gilfoxy traces toxic endurance and social becoming in the shadow of an open pit copper mine in southern Peru. This introduction weaves their conceptual arguments together before concluding with a brief reflection on the implications of situating extraction in an expanded conception of capitalism.

2. Framing mining: Shifting blueprints

Mezzadra and Neilson (2019) explore how capital “hits the ground”, an apt metaphor for the assembling of industrial mining projects. They argue for tracing the “rationalities and operations of capital at work”, and the “peculiar ways capital constitutes itself as an actor”. This collection details shifting rationalities of mining capital at work in five different settings. Across the articles, a broad shift is identified in the politics surrounding mining—from a focus on the politics of labour to the politics of compensation and distribution (Bebbington et al 2008; Le Meur and Levacher, this issue; Mwanza and Bowman, this issue). This has principally been presented in the literature as a result of increased automation in mining and the decrease in the amount of labour needed

by mining projects, long-term trends that continue to reshape the politics of production (Rubbers and Lochery, 2021, pp. 46–47). However, it also represents a reframing of the political position of mining capital at multiple scales and ongoing shifts in transnationally promoted blueprints for governing mineral extraction. These blueprints, created by international organizations, governments and companies, depict the position of mining within wider political economies as well as relations between states and mining companies; companies and communities; and companies, the environment and the economy.

Products of political processes shaped by asymmetries of power, blueprints are contested as they are produced and implemented; they are adapted and changed over time. In considering why and how blueprints shift, this special section highlights how extraction, production and exchange are dependent on processes often obscured or framed as “noneconomic”—unpaid and undervalued labour of social reproduction, the annexation of nature, and the “coding” and protection of capital by public powers (Fraser 2014, 2017; Pistor 2019). The struggles depicted in the articles shed light on unacknowledged conditions of possibility of mining—that which mining projects depend on, take, or destroy, but do not replenish, replace, or fully compensate. Over time, as the articles show, capital’s dependence on these hidden abodes can become more politically legible and contested, prompting redefinitions and reassessments of how resources can and should be valued, and provoking capital to adapt its discourses and practices to defend its ability to access resources and extract wealth (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; Kirsch, 2014).

The first wide-ranging set of blueprints for governing mining discussed in the articles aimed to reshape “mining regimes” (Campbell, 2010) amid broader restructuring of state and economy. Neoliberal policies from the 1980s were typically presented or endorsed by governments and international institutions at moments of political turmoil as a path to national and economic development. They emphasized allocating economic resources through markets; private property rights and contract enforcement would enable scarce resources to be allocated to the most efficient owner, increasing overall wealth and societal wellbeing. Despite the emphasis on the market as the vehicle for prosperity, these reforms focused on the coding of capital, ensuring assets could be protected by law and produce wealth for their owners (Pistor, 2019, pp. 1–2). Legal systems structure capitalism by underpinning money, the commodity central to capitalism, legitimizing the use of violence to protect the assets coded as capital, and establishing the contours of markets: “seemingly depoliticized arenas within which private actors could pursue their “economic” interests, free from overt “political” interference...” (Fraser, 2017, p. 150).

A generalized neoliberal blueprint for the mining sector promoted by the international financial institutions (IFIs) argued for reforms designed to attract foreign capital to drive production and open up new extractive frontiers, promising downstream benefits and a steady stream of tax revenue for governments. The 1992 Strategy for African Mining, for instance, systematized reforms pushed by the World Bank (Campbell, 2010). As Caramento details in this collection, measures included:

“The privatization of state-owned mining firms; the implementation of an earnings-based taxation system (rather than revenue-based royalties); financial liberalisation (especially the removal of exchange controls) to ease capital investment, profit repatriation, and the purchase of essential inputs; and trade liberalisation, to remove restrictions on mineral exports or barriers to the procurement of imported equipment, services, and consumables..

The reconfiguration of national mining sectors was embedded within an expanding international neoliberal order whose hierarchies reinscribed legacies of colonial extraction (Getachew, 2019). Investment agreements between states and foreign mining companies, often concluded in secret, included stabilization clauses prohibiting changes to agreements for decades. Proliferating bilateral investment treaties governed the treatment of investors, demanded full market value for

compensation of expropriated assets, and meant disputes were settled through international arbitration rather than domestic courts (Peterson, 2006); adding pressure on states to maintain a market-friendly reputation to attract investment (Szabłowski, 2007, p. 44; Gilbert, 2016).

Often attached as conditions on loan packages to indebted countries, neoliberal blueprints had an immense impact: from 1985 to the early 2000s, over 90 countries adopted or revised mining codes aiming to attract foreign capital (Bridge, 2004). And capital did flow. From the 1980s, investment in mineral exploration and production increased in the Global South (Ballard and Banks, 2003; Nwoke, 1984). As Gilfoyl (this issue) notes in his article, in Peru, following liberalization in the early 1990s, “18 million hectares of territory was signed over in concessions to private companies (Bury, 2005) with an increase of 2000 percent in corporate investment (Bebington, 2007).” Amid high commodity prices in the 2000s, a mining boom enveloped not just long-existing sites of extraction but areas thereto relatively neglected by global capital and often, politically marginalized (Conde, 2017; Phelps et al., 2015). This boom breathed air into the projection of resource extraction as a “development panacea” (Gilfoyl, this issue).

Neoliberalizing policies focused on attracting companies, projecting an ideal topography of a capitalist economy whereby private actors could pursue their economic interests within depoliticized arenas. The effect of this division between the political and the economic in practice comes alive in Asebe Regassa’s (this issue) discussion of Ethiopia’s mining regime. The new Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime, looking to rebuild the country’s war-ravaged economy in the early 1990s, embarked on a structural adjustment program in order to access international capital and credit (Demissie, 2008). Under the related privatization program, the government transferred ownership of the Adola gold mine to the privately-owned company MIDROC. The conglomerate had close ties to the ruling regime, but repeatedly invoked its private status to emphasize distance from what it labelled governmental responsibilities. Its limited contributions to the local community were presented as a voluntary gift, rather than a moral or legal responsibility (see also Rajak 2011).

It takes much work to maintain distance between the economic and the political and to portray the economy as an entity that operates according to fair rules and allows wealth to trickle down (Appel, 2012). It requires similar effort to hide the terms of the extractive bargain, the hidden abodes and conditions of possibility of capitalist extraction. The vision of mining as a driver of growth and development was soon at odds with the experience of the vast majority of people in societies reeling from the effects of privatization, curtailment of social services, and growing inequality. As the “windfall” of mineral booms benefited companies and their shareholders, people living in the shadow of mining found it hard to make a living (Fraser and Lungu, 2007), experiencing precarity and repression. Large-scale environmental disasters garnered attention to the widespread environmental degradation caused by mining (Ballard and Banks, 2003; Kirsch, 2014). Struggles against the terms of extractive bargains grew and multiplied.

Within neoliberal blueprints for mineral extraction, the state had been charged with providing an attractive environment for capital—and faulted for “unstable” regimes when trying to seek more mineral rents. Across a variety of settings, myriad social forces demanded a larger share of mining rents; governments considered “resource nationalist” policies to ensure benefits from mining stayed within national borders (Saunders and Caramento, 2018; Bowman et al., 2021). The articles in this collection trace the coming into being of a category of blueprints from the 2000s in particular that proposed to temper distributional tensions arising from industrial mining and “socially legitimize” mining projects (Mwana and Bowman, this issue). Dealing with what Szabłowski (2007, p. 28) calls the problem of “social mediation” of mining development, these governance techniques were born through action “at different sites and times, in decentralized fashion that involves transnational as well as domestic and local activism, in state and society” (Orihuela, 2021, p. 3; Campbell, 2012).

As the articles illustrate, governments' policy responses to neoliberal extraction have varied, from local content requirements seeking to enable "resource-based industrialization" (this issue [Caramento, 2022](#); [Hilson and Ovadia, 2020](#)) to, more rarely, halting mining altogether (Levacher and Meur, this issue). Diverse contexts shaped policy options and governments' ability or willingness to fulfil them. Scholarship on "extractivismo" in South America emphasizes how high commodity prices and the electoral success of leftist parties "transformed the horizons of political and economic possibility" ([Riofrancos, 2017](#), p. 278). Leftist administrations claimed a larger share of oil and mining revenues to invest in infrastructure and social policy, aiming to alleviate poverty and, in the long-term, transform the economy ([Arsel et al., 2016](#); [Van Teijlingen, 2016](#)). In many settings, however, despite social pressure on the state to redistribute mining rents, the structural power of companies narrows governments' freedom of action: in Zambia, a heavily indebted state struggled to mandate companies to hire local firms or pay higher royalties ([Caramento, 2022](#), this issue; [Saunders and Caramento, 2018](#); [Campbell and Hatcher, 2019](#)).

Claiming sovereignty over resources is not straightforward; rather, it is "distributed through the technopolitical systems that [turn] nature into resources, and resources into commodities" ([Hecht, 2014](#), p. 115). Most states turn to large mining corporations for the large amounts of capital, technology, and expertise involved in running industrial-scale extraction. In turn, mining corporations rely on states exercising some degree of sovereignty to provide "legal contractual authority" ([Emel et al., 2011](#), p. 73; [Ferguson, 2006](#), p. 207). Moreover, mining companies depend on an array of regulatory and arbitrating authorities to facilitate exploration and extraction ([Côte and Korf, 2018](#); [Akiwumi, 2012](#)). Already-existing systems of public power are thus a condition of possibility for large-scale mining projects, even if that power is exercised by discharging responsibilities to private companies ([Bolay and Knierzinger, 2021](#); [Emel et al., 2011](#)).

The collection illustrates how tensions around extraction articulated with the politics of sovereignty, nation and statehood in different locations. In South Africa ([Mwana and Bowman](#), this issue), reforms to mining legislation and efforts to redistribute mining rents were designed to answer demands made of the industry in both old and new mining sites while addressing legacies of apartheid and colonialism. They were, however, an "uneasy compromise" with a mining industry that continued to quash "more radical redistributive reform proposals". In New Caledonia meanwhile ([Levacher and Le Meur](#), this issue), ownership arrangements, revenue sharing, and other redistributive solutions to past, present and anticipated conflicts over mining were designed and proposed in a political moment defined by a "process of negotiated decolonization" following the indigenous Kanak population's struggle for independence from France. Mining was "framed as an economic means for political emancipation"; at the same time, the chance to redefine the meaning of citizenship in New Caledonia led to a broadening of the scope of compensation agreements. [Asebe \(this issue\)](#), on the other hand, demonstrates how the MIDROC Laga-Dambi Gold Mine in Ethiopia operated as part of a repressive politico-economic order; only after that order was "unsettled" by popular protests over political persecution in 2018 did a coalition of activists and local leaders subsequently succeed in having the mining company's license temporarily suspended.

The articles also draw attention to how, seeking to manage distributive tensions threatening to disrupt their operations, mining capital invested in projecting a commitment to wider society and "sustainable development" ([Kirsch, 2010](#)). In this collection, [Levacher and Le Meur](#) (see also [Benabou, 2014](#), p. 105) discuss how, facing growing public distrust and the threat of losing access to land, resources, and capital during the 1990s, some of the largest transnational mining corporations implicitly acknowledged some of the conditions of possibility of mining and began to "internalize what they had hitherto considered...externalities." By the early 2000s, as [Smith \(2021, pp. 42–43\)](#) explains, executives at some of the world's largest mining companies "publicly

acknowledged that the industry's negative reputation was a problem and committed to sustainable development as a strategy to improve it." Beyond investment in discursive adaptation, companies translated demands into business risks which were then costed—measuring the financial implications of social conflict.

Working through the multi-stakeholder consultations that typified discussions around sustainable development in the late twentieth century ([Kirsch, 2010](#)), companies invested in private governance structures and voluntary standards ([Dashwood, 2012](#), p. 7). Presented as a way to build coalitions for social development, these proposed that industrial-scale mineral extraction did not necessarily have to be conflictual ([Benson and Kirsch, 2010](#)). Underlying the argument for compromise was an assertion of mining as necessary for development, emphasizing the importance of mining and expanding the circle of complicity for mining's harms ([Smith, 2019](#), p. 812). Companies promoted the idea of seeking a "social license to operate", proving their value to "stakeholders", including shareholders and governments, but also people living around mining projects ([Owen and Kemp, 2013](#)). To operationalize this license, companies deployed corporate social responsibility programs and tools such as Impacts and Benefits Agreements. Used to influence and manage demands for redistribution and compensation, these tools specified local communities as an object of governance, requiring companies "to delineate—and, in the process, produce—a "community" that can deliver acceptance" ([Smith, 2021](#), p. 42; [Agrawal and Gibson, 1999](#); [O'Faircheallaigh, 2013](#)).

The investment of companies in shaping "the social management of harm" ([Benson and Kirsch, 2010](#), p. 460) manifests the political power of mining companies at global, national, and local scales. Companies were framed as vehicles and architects of development; this political framing was intertwined with a depiction of the state as absent, corrupt or inept, especially in extractive frontiers ([Rajak, 2011](#); [Dolan and Rajak, 2016](#); [Banks et al., 2016](#); [Dashwood, 2012](#); [Appel, 2019](#); [Bolay and Knierzinger, 2021](#); [Campbell, 2012](#)). Companies portrayed themselves as enabling social improvement and empowerment of local communities, through the value produced by their operations and programs aimed at providing alternative livelihoods to communities excluded from mining employment. At the same time, they emphasized the limits of their responsibility ([Welker, 2014](#)), denying the power relations structuring extractive projects and simultaneously relying on threats of disinvestment or coercion to quell resistance.

As they worked to frame mining as manageable, governable, and sustainable, mining corporations additionally invested in "greening" blueprints proposing to manage environmental damage on the scale of the world market. Alongside companies' "voluntary-under-pressure" moves towards self-regulation, they work alongside international lenders for mining and other private sector development projects who systematize environmental impact assessments and mitigation hierarchies (i.e. avoid, minimize, restore, and offset) at the global level ([Levacher and Meur](#), this issue; [O'Gorman, 2020](#); [The Biodiversity Consultancy, 2015](#)). Using these tools, companies seek to "render technical" the management of environmental harm ([Li, 2007b](#)), coding nature as an asset and making conservation "work for capitalism" ([Benabou, 2014](#), p. 106; [Robertson, 2006](#); [McAfee, 1999](#)). They "perform" sustainability as they extract and process ore, framing themselves as agents of improvement in areas around their mining site and guardians of the earth more widely ([Seagle 2012](#)).

Companies' performance of sustainability invokes "a spatiality of capital" that exceeds the nation-state ([Mezzadra and Neilson, 2019](#), p. 22, 2013). This "scale making project" ([Tsing, 2000](#), p. 120) allows companies to invest in notions of the greater good that exceed localities or states where mining operations are found, emphasizing the importance of economic growth and biodiversity on a global scale ([Benabou, 2014](#)). It also allows mining corporations to discursively construct a space inhabited by people managing land "inefficiently" or "irrationally" ([Seagle, 2012](#), p. 455): an extractive frontier that could be more profitably and "sustainably" incorporated into the world market and

managed through the intervention of multinational mining companies. In these greening blueprints, the abstraction of the world market becomes constitutive of social relations at a local level (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. 68) as companies, financiers, and governments seek to “abstract” resources “from [their] spatial and social contexts” (McAfee 1999: 133).

3. Locating extractive projects

The iterative effort to abstract resources from their spatial and social contexts present in the blueprints discussed above is evident in two concepts often used to map the geography of extraction: the extractive frontier and the mining enclave. The concept of resource frontiers has been used to map the creation of new mining projects, especially across the Global South, as well as the rediscovery of value in long abandoned sites (Tsing, 2003; Barney, 2009; Rasmussen and Lund, 2018; Schetter and Müller-Koné, 2021). Resource frontiers invoke the imagination of expanding capitalist horizons, rolling out from a core to swallow unexploited tracts of land, digging up wealth and waste, and forever changing the lives of those living in those spaces. The focus on expanding extractive frontiers has been situated amid the geopolitical context of the late twentieth century, shaped by Cold War militarization, the sustained power of multinational corporations in the wake of decolonization, and neoliberal structural reforms paving the way for a reconfiguration of state power (Tsing, 2005, p. 28). In mapping “extractivist geographies” (Himley, 2019; Vélez-Torres, 2016), the concept of the frontier depicts the way “capital encloses” (De Angelis, 2004), makes claims, and reconfigures landscapes, legal and ethical regimes, and lives. It emphasizes how “global capital” seeks out resources that can be “freed up” from pre-existing ecologies and livelihoods (Tsing, 2005, p. 28), and then how local spaces become further entangled in the logics of the “planetary mine” (Arboleda, 2020) and a transnational infrastructure of finance, extraction, production and exchange.

In turn, the enclave has been used to specify the “selective territorialisation” and securitization (Ferguson, 2005) of extraction within the frontier. Like the extractive frontier, the idea of the secured enclave as a principal mode of governance of extractive sites came to prominence amidst discussions of the weakening of state sovereignty amidst globalized capitalism in the post-Cold War era (Ferguson, 2006; Reno, 1998; Strange, 1996). It built on older scholarship situating resource extraction in post-colonial settings within global centre-periphery relations shaped by colonial exploitation; this literature argued that foreign capital developed enclaves for large-scale production with little benefit to local or national economies (Radley, 2020; Olukoshi, 2006; Bond, 2007; Mhone, 1996). Reflecting on the wave of privatization and foreign investment, from the 2000s social science scholarship emphasized how companies work to disentangle themselves from the surrounding society and shed the social project previously associated with parastatal companies (Ferguson, 2005).

Mapping extraction through expanding frontiers and secured enclaves provides insight into tensions that erupt over extractive projects, the wealth they promise, the damage they do, and the fundamentally unequal distribution of costs and benefits. As Himley (2019) has observed, extractivist geographies project competing, conflicting visions of the spatiality and temporality of capitalist extraction. As companies seek resources to extract and states seek capital, they tend to paint an expansive view of the bounty of extraction, minimizing and obscuring risks and social and ecological damage (see Gilfoy, this issue). Mineral extraction is tied to projects of national development and global economic growth, presenting encompassing, inclusive geographies. On the other hand, once access has been secured, mineral extraction tends to exhibit a “punctuated and discontinuous geographical expression” (Bridge 2011, 318); while wealth flows easily out of localities, toxicity and ruined landscapes remain behind. Such spatialities trouble the relationship between mining and promises of development and growth

(Himley, 2019, p. 6; Arsel et al., 2016), reinforcing perceptions of a “resource curse”.

The articles in this collection map troubling spatialities and temporalities of extraction, but contextualize the making of enclaves and frontiers within the multi-scalar politics of capitalist extraction. They trace how mining frontiers and enclaves are projected and constructed by different sets of actors, and entangled in broader political economies already shaped by capitalist projects. They build on observations that as companies work to produce and securitize extractive enclaves, they inevitably create political and social entanglements (Appel, 2012; Hönke, 2010; Kesselring, 2018). Indeed, recent literature has argued that the entanglement of mining companies in different contexts produces a range of spaces and infrastructures, social formations and networks, while reorienting others (Rubbers, 2019; Negi, 2014).

In their contribution on policies of compensation in the mining sector in New Caledonia, Levacher and Le Meur use the term “minescapes” (Ey and Sherval, 2016) to situate mining projects within broader spatial and social domains charged with a range of political, ecological and social interests. They demonstrate “how the boundaries of mining activities and their impact perimeters are both subject to spatial, social, and economic controversies, conflicts, and negotiations.” Struggles over compensation and debates over balancing the costs and benefits of mining have, they argue, introduced transformations “in the local governance of extractive industries, from an enclave-centred conception of mining to an integrative policy encompassing territories directly or indirectly affected by the mining activity”. In particular, they trace the shifting political strategies of customary, municipal and indigenous authorities and organizations in New Caledonia as they sought to scale-up and broaden the scope of agreements with mining companies, in one region building a coalition to place a moratorium on mining. They situate these shifts within New Caledonia’s decolonization process, demonstrating how mining projects are integrated into projects of state-building, nationalism, development, peace- and war-making.

Other contributions to this collection emphasize the importance of historicizing and contextualizing the (re)production of resource frontiers (Akiwumi and D’Angelo, 2018). The danger lurking within the metaphor of the frontier is what gives it its power—its projection of maps of inside and outside, of the included and the excluded, the known world and the (often racialized) other, of those subsumed within capitalist landscapes and the market versus those outside (Barney, 2009; Cleary, 1993). As critical perspectives on frontiers have argued, frontiers do not advance across empty space, but are remade and reworked, sometimes on the same ground (Makki, 2012; Kelly and Peluso, 2015; Rasmussen and Lund, 2018). Capitalist enclosures can be remade by capitalist ventures, designated as ripe for a new type of resource extraction.

In Mnwana and Bowman’s article on mine-community conflict in the rural platinum belt in northern South Africa, the expanding resource frontier is a rural area that has long been shaped by mining capitalism, state oppression, and racialized inequality. South Africa’s new mining frontiers are former “homeland” areas, created by the apartheid government as reserves for the reproduction of cheap migrant labour for white-owned businesses. As the labour requirements of South Africa’s mining industry have declined, black rural residents have become “surplus” to the requirements of capitalist accumulation” (Mnwana and Bowman, this issue; Scully and Britwum, 2019). Instead, the land beneath their feet is the source of platinum, and mining companies have occupied huge tracts of farmland. The positioning of the area in relation to extraction has shifted, and with it the social and political configurations and logics of struggles and conflicts. Emphasizing the extended context of mining capitalism highlights this making and remaking of frontiers, the multiple, intersecting imaginations of frontiers, and the temporal, timebound nature of frontier space.

Examining the making of frontiers also means contextualizing their usually troubling politics of representation (Luning, 2018). Frontiers are not just zones of interaction and contestation between competing social

orders (Rasmussen and Lund, 2018), but political projects, imagined and constructed “through a gaze from elsewhere” in multiple ways by multiple audiences (Klinger, 2017, p. 16; Barney, 2009; Cons and Eilenberg, 2019). Frontier discourse evokes zones beyond the rule of law: spaces of “uncertain and undeveloped entitlements, communal claims, and the absence of state guarantees to property” (Blomley, 2003, p. 124), but also places with potential, that could be used in a better way for the greater good. To make a frontier is to stake and enact claims to land and resources, often based on constructed histories that deny the experiences and labour of those inhabiting the land (Neumann, 2001; Rasmussen and Lund, 2018). The trope of the frontier has been central to colonization and military occupation, evident in European empire-building and mobilization of notions of racial superiority and ethnic hierarchies (Mbembe, 2003).

Indeed, within the extractive industries, financiers, consultants, companies, and governments map countries and regions previously labelled as “developing” or “emerging” as “frontier markets” that can be targeted by “impatient capital” eager for rewards for taking risks (Gilbert, 2016, pp. 25–27). As Gilbert (2016, p. 27) has argued, the idea of a frontier works to shift spaces seen as fragile and marginal to centre-stage in the work of profit-seeking, folding “images of an exploitable past into visions of a profitable future.” Extractive frontiers are actively constructed from space that is already incorporated within sovereign borders—into the state and the international system—but often peripheralized within it (Klinger, 2017, p. 16; Kelly and Peluso, 2015). As Lima and Kmoch (2021) have emphasized, the longstanding framing of a space as marginal, a space ruled through the active choice of neglect, can mean an extractive project is projected as the only way for progress, as alternatives are silenced.

Studying the (re)making of frontiers and enclaves shows how sites of extraction are nested in pre-existing hierarchies of citizenship and sovereignty. These power relations enable governments and corporations to inflict environmental damage and force those around the mine to live with pollution. In this collection, Asebe Regassa traces how the framing of the area around the Laga-Dambi Gold Mine in southern Ethiopia as a frontier zone has been used to justify the creation and expansion of the mine as a securitized enclave, an operation garrisoned against the claims of local people. Far from a new trope, the frontier has long featured in Ethiopian political history as a motif justifying resource appropriation and dispossession, a legitimizing strategy of an empire-building project. The project of the frontier has been reworked, projected, and reclaimed by different regimes, as they declare themselves the “ultimate agent of civilization” and “engineer of modernist projects”, with a more effective “rubric of improvement” (Li, 2007b) to underlie their state-building project (Regassa et al., 2019, p. 935). Asebe’s account of the grievous harm committed against lives and the landscapes recalls analysis of how sites of extraction can become “sacrifice zones” (Fox, 1999; Klinger, 2017) where the loss of local lives, livelihoods and landscapes is justified by utilitarian logic in reference to the greater good—a greater good which is defined at multiple scales, especially nationally and transnationally. The creation of zones of sacrifice draws on and reinscribes historical patterns of domination and purposeful neglect (Peña and Ross, 2021, p. 5; Lerner, 2010).

4. Life-making amid extraction

Contextualizing mining projects amidst wider power constellations and timescapes of capitalism opens up ways to consider life-making and self-making in and near sites of extraction. This collection recounts experiences of people resettled by mining projects (Mnwana and Bowman, 2022), former parastatal employees turned local mine suppliers and service providers (Caramento), long-time inhabitants, farmers, and artisanal miners in what are framed as extractive frontiers (Mnwana and Bowman, Asebe), people migrating to mining sites (Gilfoxy, 2022), local and national politicians (Asebe, Levacher and Le Meur, 2022), as well as academics carrying out policy-oriented research on extractive pasts,

presents and futures (Levacher and Le Meur, Asebe). The articles build on a large corpus of literature detailing how large-scale mining projects have reworked lives and livelihoods, and the contradictory and ambivalent relationships between people and mining projects.

Scholarship has continued to grapple with how to conceptualize processes of subject-making during socio-environmental change provoked by extraction—the most marked and recent example being the conceptualization of “extractive subjects” (Frederiksen and Himley, 2020). As Jakobsen (2022) has observed, many approaches adopt Foucauldian terms, tracing how technologies of government “change socio-political possibilities and produce new subjectivities” (Frederiksen and Himley, 2020). As a recent contribution summarized, mining projects become “sites of governmentality”, “the ensemble of disciplining processes, institutions and tactics that attempt to shape human conduct...” (Bainton and Skrzypek, 2021, p. 29; Dean, 1999). These analyses situate the creation of extractive subjects in mining areas in the “extractive frontier”, focusing on greenfield mines in rural spaces where the state has a “limited presence”, forcing companies into more direct relations with communities in which they assume state-like roles. The argument represents, as Jakobsen has argued, “a view of power as relatively successful and complete” (18), able to create “coherently discernible new subjects”—governable subjects.

The portrayal of struggles around extraction in this collection invite us to consider two dynamics of subjectivity in the shadow of extraction. First, they invite us to consider the implications of the expansive and uneven geography of extraction and its profound embeddedness in wider capitalist orders. Drawing a line around who is and is not an extractive subject is difficult. Extractive projects are “intensely local” in their immediate material effects (Bebington et al., 2018, p. 218). However, people move in and out of mining zones; extractive projects provoke and force migration, expulsion, and resettlement. Moreover, extractive projects involve wide networks of finance, expertise, and labour – blending into our planet’s “circulatory system of capital” (Arboleda, 2020, p. 27).

From one perspective, the articles, as they trace the multiple scales of mining politics, serve as a reminder that, to a degree, we are all “extractive subjects”, formed in a world run on extraction. Foucauldian thought emphasizes no subject is free of power; rather that subjects are formed by power—with the implication that “power is not simply what we oppose but also...what we depend on for our existence...” (Butler 1997: 2). The articles reveal the importance of paying attention to the subjectivities not just of those included in communities identified as mine-affected, but also mine employees and managers; businesspeople and contractors; scholars and civil society actors studying mining impacts or opposing mining projects; government actors deciding how to regulate mining; and voters and consumers (see also Bridge, 2011). By contextualizing mining enclaves and extractive frontiers as political projects imagined and reworked in financial centres, capital cities, universities, as well as in and around mining concessions, the articles remind us of our own positions as subjects within the “mosaic of relations that we call capitalism” (Moore, 2015, p. 13).

Returning to subjectivities in and around mine shafts and pits, the articles underline that to understand subject-making, it is essential to carefully contextualize the politics of extraction. As this introduction has argued, extractive projects—assemblages of multiple government techniques—are embedded in wider political orders, including in sites where the state rules through relative neglect or has a limited presence. Mining capital articulates with ongoing struggles over state power, the distribution of wealth, and citizenship and belonging. Politics within company walls and in surrounding communities are mutually constitutive (Atal, 2017). Moreover, an array of regulatory and arbitrating authorities mediate and shape capitalist extraction (Côte and Korf, 2018; Akiwumi, 2012; Golub and Rhee, 2013), “thickening” politics around mining concessions. Subjectivities, within and beyond mining company walls, are shaped by multiple, intersecting and at times contradictory, historically constituted and contested projects of domination.

In this collection, Gilfoy emphasizes how people's reactions to the Bambas copper mine in the Andean highlands of southern Peru reflect the ways in which the mine recalibrated local geographies of opportunity shaped by historical patterns of social marginality, labour migration, and racialized education. Caramento explains how the business strategies of Zambian mine contractors have been determined not just by their asymmetric relations with mining companies, but their history as parastatal employees and their ongoing dependence on an indebted state itself dependent on mining revenues. In Mnwana and Bowman's article, the claims and power of resettled people protesting against mines in former "homeland" areas have to be read through the lens of post-apartheid politics in which "people whose labour is no longer wanted have acquired other kinds of power—specifically, political rights within a democratic regime whose political base is precisely the impoverished and historically excluded masses of 'the poor'" (Ferguson, 2015, p. 12; Scully and Britwum, 2019, pp. 409–410). Pre-existing social categories and conflicts affect how extractive projects impact people and their reactions to company and state actors (Mujere, 2020, p. 68).

Secondly, thinking through an expanded conception of capitalism invites us to consider the irresolvable "tension of the subject" (Di Nunzio, 2019). Recent scholarship on extractive subjects draws on thinking about the "new political and economic subject" argued to be essential to the expansion of (especially neoliberal) capitalism (Frederiksen and Himley, 2020; Brown, 2015). There is little doubt that extractive projects reshape forms of exclusion and inclusion, reshape lifeworlds, and reconfigure relations between what are understood as the state, society, and the market (Frederiksen and Himley, 2020). However, subjectivity cannot be read from capitalist doctrines and practices alone; their impact on consciousness may be significant but is also indeterminate (Parry, 2018, pp. 28–29; Scully and Britwum, 2019, p. 408). Existentialist anthropologist critiques are relevant here. They interrupt linear models of "governmental-power-to-subject-making dynamics" (Jakobsen, 2022, p. 4), warning against conflating subjectivity with "roles, rules, routines, and rituals" or depicting people's lives as "little more than allegories and instantiations of political, historical, or social processes." There is something "unpredictable and new" in "what transpires in the transitional space between persons..." (Jackson, 2012, pp. 4, 8). To return to Butler (1997: 17): while the subject is formed by power, the subject "exceeds...that to which it is bound." Social science does a political and conceptual injury in closing the distance between subjectivities desired by those wielding power and people's internal reckonings.

The articles emphasize people's reflections and calculations on how to live meaningfully, what constitutes justice and fairness, and how things might be otherwise (Di Nunzio, 2019, p. 18). People react to the gap between what extraction promises and what it delivers. In Asebe's article, people living around the MIDROC Laga-Dambi Gold Mine in southern Ethiopia limit the demands they make of the mine due to the military force exercised against them, but they condemn and critique the mine's destruction of their land and violence against their communities. They do not internalise that the mine, the government, or the market is just and right; they reflect on how their choices and life chances are limited by the mine's presence. They are aware of lived contradictions and the suffering they involve: a former employee knows his work guarding the mine destroying his community's land fulfilled the company's aim of using local knowledge against local people, creating conflict in his community. In his contribution, meanwhile, Gilfoy argues that people living around the open pit copper mine endure toxicity, but as part of a strategy that shifts over time. Their endurance "is an exhaustible and unequally distributed quality, and calculations must consistently be recalibrated to determine whether silence and uncertainty remain viable strategies in the Andean search for a 'better life'." The observations of internal struggles and contradictory interests echo recent scholarship focusing on the diverse reactions of people to mining projects—and the bitterness that can accompany accommodation (Orihuela et al., 2022). They manifest a dual level of incoherence that

scholarship must consider (Jakobsen, 2022, p. 11), at once a record of how people live with contradiction as well as a reminder of the multiplicity and complexity of subject positions involved in the politics around extraction and encompassing capitalist projects.

5. Conclusions: Contextualizing mining capital

The articles in this collection examine the thick, often volatile and tense politics around mining concessions, tracing lobbying efforts to secure business from mining companies, protests demanding compensation, anxious quests to secure access to mining rents, and the work of coalitions seeking suspension of mining all together. The articles demonstrate how mining capital exercises power over populations, reworking livelihoods and life chances, political orders, and landscapes. However, not only is the nature of that rule contested and domination never complete, but mining companies' power over territory, resources and people is constituted through alliances and compromises with a range of state and non-state institutions (Atal, 2017; Larmer and Latzerza, 2017). The power of mining capital over people, places, and resources is co-constituted, contingent and unstable.

This introduction has proposed that to understand the operations of mining capital, as well as mining's impact on lives and landscapes, it is important to draw on expanded conceptions of capitalism: heuristic models that pay attention to multiple hidden abodes of "non-economic" processes and recognize the long-lasting legacies of variegated histories of extraction. Capitalism is not merely an economic system, but a system in which profit depends on seeking and confiscating surplus from hidden abodes. Mining projects have long been recognized as dependent on the expropriation and exploitation of labour and on unpaid labour of social reproduction. They rely on nature as an input and a place to dump waste. Critically, mining projects also depend on the multi-scalar systems of public power that encode and protect capital. The assemblage of a mining projects is implicated in the politics of each of these realms.

In this introductory article, I explored three implications of situating mining projects within such an expanded conception of capitalism. I first traced shifting blueprints for governing mineral extraction that seek to ensure mining capital's access to land, labour and resources. The politics of these policy templates and tools show how, while mining projects power capitalism, they also undermine its conditions of possibility, provoking struggles and requiring work to maintain extraction. Secondly, I argued for a contextualization of extractivist geographies of new resources and extractive frontiers that pays attention to older projects of enclosure, domination or neglect. Practices of categorizing, dividing and mapping "outsides" and "others" have long been central to capitalism and its violent practices of confiscation and conscription (Fraser, 2016). Scholarship must question, contextualize and historicize depictions of capitalism's limits and proclamations of integration and inclusion. Thirdly, I emphasized that this process of contextualization opens avenues for understanding the diverse life projects and lived contradictions of individuals and collectives in the shadow of extraction.

The five articles that follow demonstrate different approaches to situating mining in the multi-scalar politics of capitalism. Together, the collection shows how contextualizing extraction within an expanded conception of capitalism helps illuminate the planetary politics that drive extraction while emphasizing place-specific trajectories of corporate power, distributive projects, protest and accommodation (Arboleda, 2020; Orihuela et al., 2022; Peša, 2022). Such a framework prevents what Gilfoy in this collection terms "bracketing out" the politics of extractive sites from their broader social, political and historical context, while recognizing the intensely local and long-lasting scars, toxins and vulnerabilities created by extractive industries.

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