

Global Humanities Institute project  
**Post-extractivist legacies and landscapes: Humanities, artistic and activist responses**

**Pre-Institute meeting Estonia, Tallinn and Ida-Virumaa 28.04-30.04.2023**

**Programme, Friday 28 April 2023**

Tallinn University, room A-325 and online <https://zoom.us/j/99795978085>

13.00-14.00 Rano Turaeva (LMU, Munich)

'Governing Mining Cities in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Post-Soviet Challenges'

14.05- 15.05 John Grzinich (Estonian Academy of Arts)

'Geofractions, creative soundscape research in Ida-Virumaa'

15.05-15.30 Coffee break

15.30 -17.00 'Understanding and representing extractivism: methodologies and approaches'

Magdalena Taube (Berliner Gazette) The project After Extractivism: Challenging the Ecological-Economic Complex

Anu Printsman (Tallinn University) A geographer's autoethnography on landscapes of brown gold

Daniel Kötter (documentary film director, Berlin) Landscape, Extractivism and 360° Filming

**Abstracts**

'Governing mining Cities in Central Asia and Caucasus: Post-Soviet Challenges'

**Rano Turaeva**

Under the command economy of the Soviet Union, mining cities and industrial projects made the cornerstone of the Soviet economy where mono-cities were created around the centres of mineral resources all over the Soviet Union. These cities were centrally managed from Moscow with special Moscow channels of provisions known as *moskovskoe obespechenie*. Local states played only a marginal role in these cities. These cities became the desired places not only for working but also for shopping (special products available under *moskovskoe obespechenie*) and better services. These cities became the centres of attraction for qualified labour and experts, as well as other service branches (medical, cultural, educational, economic and other fields).

With the end of the Soviet Union, the system of Moscow governance also collapsed and mining was privatised as well as subsidies stopped. Some cities with lower scale or with less important minerals were hit more than others which had more attractive minerals. Shrinking happened in terms of demography, mining volume, investments, infrastructure and, consequently, becoming politically less important. Additionally, environmental and health conditions worsened, adding to or resulting from this shrinking. The conditions of working in mining became not only economically precarious but also insecure, considering the lack of investment in the maintenance of the technical conditions and security provisions within mines. Economic collapse and fall of social security systems resulting in poverty also brought deterioration of basic health conditions of the population. The persistent deterioration of the universal service is not only reflected in the reduction of local infrastructure but also manifests itself in massive downsizing. Abandoned residential buildings caused infrastructural problems, especially with regard to water supply and heating.

### **‘Geofractions, creative soundscape research in Ida-Virumaa’ John Grzinich**

‘Geofractions’ is a frame for a project that grew out of a long-term sonic and geographic survey of the Ida-Virumaa region in northeast Estonia. What started out as a curious visit in 2008 developed into an extended investigation into an environment shaped by industrial scale mining and processing. For just over a century, extractive mining has yielded significant reserves of oil shale, a strategic energy source for Estonia. This in turn has shaped and strongly defined both the land and culture of the region. Over a period of more than 10 years, I gathered a significant amount of sound recordings, photographs and video material which has formed a growing body of work. In this presentation I would like to share my experiences in Ida-Virumaa, particularly investigating the more-than-human sonic perspective and how this resulted in a collection of soundscape compositions.

### **Roundtable: Understanding and representing extractivism: methodologies and approaches**

#### **‘After Extractivism’ Magdalena Traube**

How can we build our future on the legacies and claims of those who, yesterday as today, have been plunged into existential hardship by the ecological-economic complex? And how can we make such struggles a source of inspiration for a common cause? The Berliner Gazette (BG) project AFTER EXTRACTIVISM launches its intervention at a critical juncture: Economic and ecological crises are increasingly devastatingly intertwined and fuel each other – an ecological-economic complex (or rather: vicious circle) that produces pandemics, extreme weather events, the slow violence of climate catastrophe, and outright wars. When governments (and companies) officially recognize that the realms of ecology and

economy intertwine in increasingly disastrous ways, they promote ostensibly “sustainable” measures, but in fact advance mostly variants of the dominant capitalist mode as solutions to these problems. However, isn’t said economic mode key to the problem? Does deploying it as part of the supposed solution not only reinforce and sustain disastrous tendencies? Thus, shouldn’t organizing transitions into a better world be inseparable from fundamentally questioning the dominant economic mode organized around the pursuit of endless growth, energy-hungry profit coercion, and, last but not least, resource-devouring extractivism? Wishing to explore these questions, the BG project proposes we learn from the last big transition – the post-Cold War transition from “communism” to capitalism – and raise the question of transition justice. This means tackling what is usually denied in official accounts of post-1989 transitions: class struggles and the immense, long-lasting political, social, and, ultimately, environmental costs of transitions. AFTER EXTRACTIVISM entails a text series with contributions from more than 50 scholars, activists and journalists; an international conference that took place in Oct 2022 in Berlin; and a multimedia website. More here: <https://projekte.berlinergazette.de/after-extractivism/>

### **‘A geographer’s autoethnography on landscapes of brown gold’**

**Anu Printsman**

Being born and raised in Kohtla-Järve, the capital of oil shale mining and chemical works, I was sure never to do any research about my hometown – and here I am. The love-hate relationship continues as my best article hasn’t been written yet. My father had worked 10 years in the underground mine, my mother has worked in the chemical industry all her life. But I’m not an autochthon, my parents were Soviet reallocated, migrants. As a family of three, we got a two-room 48 m<sup>2</sup> flat in a five-storey pre-fabricated house built in 1977 considered a small luxury elsewhere – when I started to earn my first salaries at university, I could have bought one of these flats per month. We are an Estonian-speaking minority to the Russian-speaking majority in the area that has been compared to Donbas area in Ukraine.

Industrial mining of oil shale started during the Russian empire, in the whirlwinds of WWI fuel shortage, continued through Estonian first independence period, grew out of proportion during the Soviet period and has been in decline since re-independence. It is not completely post-extractivist as mining continues as we want to keep our energy independence from Russia. But at some point, oil shale – or brown gold – will come to an end. The war in Ukraine brought along opposing developments: maybe there is a chance for fast forward for green transition? On the other hand, the energy prices skyrocketed, more miners were hired and also the impact of pacifying the local population of Ida-Virumaa is important...And then I will talk about the landscapes.

### **‘Landscape, Extractivism and 360° Filming’**

**Daniel Kötter**

Extractivism is a phenomenon that translates the local and the global into each other, superimposes conflicting time dimensions and transforms space on a large scale. And thus extractivism is an important subject of filmmaking. In a world that is constantly being decolonised, this also poses new challenges for filmmaking in and

from Germany. How does one position oneself and one's camera? What forms of collaboration across differences need to be developed?

Daniel Kötter critically discusses his own research methods on mining and the potential of 360° filmmaking in Germany and in the so-called "Global South" using the example of his film series landscapes and bodies.

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