

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: PROPOSED PAPERS FOR A SPECIAL ISSUE OF *SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, & HUMAN VALUES*

THEME: “UNDERGROUND STS: SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DEPTH BEYOND EXTRACTIVISM”

GUEST EDITORS: ALESSANDRO RIPPA AND MATTHÄUS REST

CLOSES: 4 SEPTEMBER 2022

The editors of [Science, Technology, & Human Values](#) and guest editors Alessandro Rippa and Matthäus Rest are calling for proposed papers for an upcoming Special Issue. The abstract for the Special Issue follows below. **Interested scholars should send proposals for full papers (200-250 word abstract, plus 100-150 word biographical note) to sthvjournal@gmail.com before 4 September 2022. Scholars based outside the US, UK and EU are particularly encouraged to submit proposals.** Applicants will be informed of the outcome before October 2022, with full manuscripts expected in February 2023 (unless otherwise negotiated). Individual manuscripts should be no more than 8,000 words including endnotes and references.

SPECIAL ISSUE ABSTRACT:

Recently, beyond vertical geopolitics (Elden 2013) and the blatant extractivism of Carbon Democracy (Mitchell 2011), the underground has become a site of diverse investigations in the social sciences: it has physical volume as well as temporal depth and therefore it is a site of scientific knowledge production on the planetary past and the future of resources. In a special section for the journal [Engaging Science, Technology, and Society](#) on the topic, Kinchy et al. (2018) make a strong case for STS's unique position for exploring regimes of knowledge, expertise, and power surrounding underground extractive practices. In doing so they propose a new STS subfield that “examines the technoscientific aspects of how questions about extraction are posed and deliberated, how extraction itself occurs, and how the consequences of such extraction are addressed” (23). Building on such scholarship, in this special issue we seek to expand and reframe STS's approaches to the underground beyond extractivism, thus juxtaposing it with other activities and forms of knowledge in and on the underground. In doing so, we engage with recent scholarship in which the conceit of the Anthropocene is leading to a critical re-consideration of not only the knowledge regimes that underpin underground exploration today, but the fundamental ontological categories that lie at the core of such endeavours.

Elizabeth Povinelli (2016), for instance, coined the term “geontology” to address how geology, and the ontological distinction between life and nonlife that lies at its core, legitimises extractive, colonial, and racist regimes. Our Anthropogenic age of extinction and extractive capital, according to Povinelli, places geontologies in sharper relief and makes it imperative to rethink the assumptions that underlie scientific endeavours and market logics. Kathryn Yusoff (2019) has further argued that geology is inseparable from the histories of dispossession and genocide implicit in extractive work, and explicitly questions how such legacies remain at the root of our current notion of the Anthropocene. On the one hand, the foundation of the modern disciplines of geology and biology, and of modern geologic chronology itself, is inextricably bound to the exploitation of coalfields and other extractive activities (Povinelli 2017). What kicked off the Anthropocene, in other words, is part and parcel of the discipline that defined it. On the other hand, as the Anthropocene is a political as much as a scientific concept that aims to define environmental crises and future trajectories of extinction, it is crucial to focus our analyses on settler colonial logics (Yusoff 2020). Or, as Zeynep Oğuz (2020) put it: “The question of ‘What is deemed to be inert and thus extractable?’ is inseparable from the question ‘Whose life matters and whose life does not?’”

Setting off from these observations, this special issue interrogates what it means and what it takes to know the underground. In the underground the neat distinction between animate and inanimate nature becomes hard to uphold: give it enough time and resin becomes amber or DNA leaks from bones and accumulates in the surrounding soil. At the same time, knowing the underground is always uncertain and thus remains an epistemological horizon where conflicting onto-epistemologies clash. This special issue invites reflections on the underground by social scientists working at the intersection of STS, anthropology, political geography,

archaeology and geology, reflecting on the nexus of spatial and temporal depth. While maintaining the central role that extractivism plays in current understanding of the underground, we particularly welcome papers that address the politics of scientific knowledge production in sub-surface worlds, and how these are entangled (or refuse to be) with indigenous knowledge and expertise.

Some of the questions that we address are the following: how does the underground come to be known in the everyday lives of human and nonhuman communities across the globe? What role do geological knowledge and experts play in shaping extractive economies in the various sites? To what extent does such “scientific” knowledge rely on Indigenous knowledge, and to what extent is the latter accounted for?

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