

Facing Extractivisms: Arts and Literatures (Paris, 1–3 Jun 26)

INHA Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Académie du Climat, Université Paris 8
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2nd International Conference.

The concept of extractivism has recently become widespread in the vocabulary of the environmental humanities to designate processes of appropriation and exploitation of natural resources in order to sustain the global capitalist system. The phenomenon of extracting resources from the subsoil of peripheral countries is not new, and some scholars trace the origins of extractivism back to the colonial period (Acosta, 2012) and to the international division of labour within the world-system (Wallerstein, 1974; Amin, 1976). How, then, can we explain the recent visibility of this neologism?

The term emerged in the 2010s, at a moment when the Latin American New Left was caught between post-extractivist ecological ambitions and development projects based on the national exploitation of natural resources. Widely used by decolonial thinkers, the term spread as critical theories from Latin America were increasingly received—academically and politically—in the United States, Europe, and Africa. That said, the resonance of the term today is also due to the fact that, over the past two decades, the global economy has become particularly extractive. New forms of mining have emerged that no longer focus solely on gold, copper, or tin, but disrupt multiple ecosystemic and geopolitical balances in order to extract coltan, cobalt, lithium, tantalum, rare earths, and other minerals upon which the development of new communication, transport, and supposedly green energy technologies depends.

The current interest in extractivist frameworks can also be understood as a response to governmental failures in addressing global warming. Over the past fifteen years, despite the annual succession of COP meetings and widespread civic mobilisations, the international community has failed to halt greenhouse gas emissions—particularly because efforts have focused on reducing fossil fuel consumption without banning their extraction (Kühne, 2023). Approaching ecological issues from the perspective of raw material extraction allows for a shift in focus, making it possible to identify the actors who benefit from the ever-increasing production of fossil fuels—coal, oil, gas—and, consequently, the links between extractivist systems and specific forms of power (Scott, 2017; Malm, 2016). Finally, speaking of extractivisms enables reflection at a local scale, rendering visible the territories that suffer their devastating consequences and the new forms of ecological struggle that arise to defend them (Svampa, 2019; Ouassak, 2023).

In May 2025, the first international conference "Contemporary Art and Extractivist Culture" took place at the University of Lleida and the University of Barcelona. This initial gathering made it possible to develop an analytical and conceptual framework for extractivism, conceived not as a sectoral phenomenon but as a historical regime of accumulation, governance, and subjectivity production. Drawing on a genealogy linking colonialism, modernity, and global capitalism (Harvey, 2003; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2014), the conference approached extractivism as a transversal logic of dispossession articulating the exploitation of natural resources, territories, bodies, knowledge, and forms of life. Rather than reducing extractivism to mining or the energy industry, the first edition proposed an expanded cartography of extractivisms—natural, sociocultural, epistemological, biotechnological, and digital—allowing for an analysis of the structural continuity between coloniality, advanced capitalism, and contemporary technosciences (Gómez-Barris, 2017; Segato, 2013; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2017; Terranova, 2004). From this perspective, contemporary art was approached as a critical and epistemological dispositif capable of rendering visible, problematising, and reconfiguring the material, symbolic, and affective infrastructures sustaining global extractivism (Braidotti, 2009; Gudynas, 2014; Acosta & Martínez, 2009).

Proposals should be sent to: extractivisms2@gmail.com before 30/03/2026.

Axes of the Conference

The second edition of the conference, "Arts and Literatures Facing Extractivisms," to be held in Paris on 1, 2, and 3 June 2026, proposes two shifts.

First, a geographical and linguistic shift, detaching the concept of extractivism from the Spanish-speaking cultural context in which it emerged, in order to assess the extent to which it resonates with the realities and theoretical developments of Francophone and Anglophone postcolonial worlds.

Second, a disciplinary shift, extending beyond contemporary art to include other fields of knowledge and creation. The aim is to broaden the scope to professionals and specialists in the visual arts—cinema, documentary, comics, advertising—as well as various forms of literary practice—writers, directors, screenwriters, critics. In recent years, collaborations among researchers in these fields have generated fruitful cultural analyses, particularly around environmental issues. As seen in *La compañía* by Verónica Gerber (2019), which functions simultaneously as novel, photographic album, and installation, or in the trajectory of Sinzo Aanza, who—from *Généalogie d'une banalité* (2015) to *Plaidoirie pour vendre le Congo* (2020)—successively explores the novel, dramaturgy, and visual arts, works emerging from extractivist contexts often exist at the intersection of multiple creative disciplines, playing with text and image, space and time, archive and imagination. Addressing them in their full complexity requires open, transdisciplinary approaches.

For this reason, the conference is structured around three complementary axes:

1. Arts and Literatures in Extractivist Cultures

This axis aims not only to further define and test the concept of extractivism, but also to deepen our understanding of the relationships that arts and literatures maintain with extractive processes, and to grasp their relative positions within the contemporary extractivist field of forces. For some scholars, the history of modernity is the history of the planetary implantation of extractivist

systems such as the plantation economy (Walvin, 2018), the Plantationocene (Haraway & Tsing, 2015; Ferdinand, 2019), or fossil democracies (Mitchell, 2011). According to the Petrocultures research group, “fossil fuels have also shaped our values, practices, habits, beliefs, and ways of feeling” (Szeman & Badia, 2015), shaping even intimate social constructions such as gender (Daggett, 2023). Others argue that, unlike extraction—which refers strictly to a material process—extractivism constitutes a culture in itself, a set of political and ideological dispositifs (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021). From literary constructions of extractive modernity (Le Menager, 2015) to advertising and photography (Barricarte & Vindel, 2025), and visual arts (Nesselrod Moncada, 2023), what role do arts and literatures play in shaping extractivist cultures?

2. Arts and Literatures as Extractivisms

The second axis focuses on how certain artistic and literary approaches may themselves be described as forms of cultural extractivism. In their 2014 article “Refusing Research,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang address the problems raised by research-creation practices in peripheral Indigenous communities considered “other” by artists producing works for hegemonic audiences. The article outlines what might be termed artistic extractivism, related to epistemic and ontological extractivism (Grosfoguel, 2016) or cultural extractivism (Simpson & Klein, 2012). More recently, the ways in which hegemonic museums or Western art markets have speculated on the commercial value of contemporary Amazonian art can also be understood as forms of cultural extractivism (Villar, 2025). In many respects, this reproduces colonial-era gestures of predation, appropriation, and extraction of artistic resources from colonised peoples, followed by their massive export to metropolitan museum collections (Sarr & Savoy, 2018). While contemporary debates on restitution represent one way of repairing colonial artistic extractivism, questions remain regarding what extractive dimensions persist in contemporary art and literary practices, and what a non-extractivist research-creation approach might entail (Sebastiani & Veinguer, 2024).

3. Arts and Literatures Against Extractivisms—and Beyond

Finally, the third axis examines how and to what extent arts and literatures can function as critical tools against extractivism. From realist depictions of the mechanisms of mining and oil industries (Le Menager), to the affective and theoretical displacements produced by ecological science fiction or cli-fi (Puranen, 2022), and to the articulations that visual artists establish with territorial struggles against large-scale extractive projects (Serafini & Merlinsky, 2020), arts and literatures allow us to better perceive and understand extractivist logics. What remains to be seen is the extent of their oppositional capacity when understood as critical weapons, and how they may be articulated with activist practices to achieve political effectiveness (Quiroz, 2021). In any case, resistant imaginaries undoubtedly play a decisive role in imagining futures of degrowth and “happy sobriety”—a positive way of describing a future liberated from extractivist and productivist logics. This may contribute not only to a future for the humanities (Citton, 2010), but also to a future through the humanities.

Submission Guidelines

We invite researchers in environmental sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts. Proposals from curators, cultural managers, artists, and activists are also very welcome. Each proposal must address one or more of the three axes and include:

- Provisional title

- Author's name and institutional affiliation (if applicable)
- Indication of the selected axis or axes
- Abstract (maximum 300 words, excluding bibliography)
- Short author biography (maximum 150 words)

Proposals may be submitted in French, English, or Spanish, languages in which the conference will be held.

Please send proposals to: extractivisms2@gmail.com

Submission deadline: 30 March 2026

Notification of acceptance before 13 April 2026

Travel and accommodation expenses cannot be covered by the organization

Conference format: the conference is a full face-to-face event but welcomes different ways of participating:

Oral presentations of 20 minutes maximum

Performances

Film presentations

Selection Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated by the scientific committee according to the following criteria: originality and scope of the proposal; relevance of the topic; clarity and precision in the presentation of objectives, approaches, methodologies, and expected outcomes; and critical and innovative perspective.

For further information, please contact: extractivisms2@gmail.com

About the LAE Network (Literatures, Arts, Extractivisms):

Following the first conference "Contemporary Art and Extractivist Culture," we formed a working group to continue exploring the persistence of colonial logics in processes of material and symbolic appropriation, as well as the forms of resistance, knowledge, and emotions emerging in territories marked by ecological and social devastation. We organised two international seminars, in October 2025 and February 2026 in Barcelona, to create a space for exchange among researchers, artists, and activists working in art history, literature, sociology, political ecology, decolonial studies, and environmental humanities. The LAE network seeks to promote critical analysis of the relationship between cultural production and extractive economies through interdisciplinary dialogue and to support critical artistic and scientific practices in the face of global capitalist expansion.

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CFP: Facing Extractivisms: Arts and Literatures (Paris, 1-3 Jun 26). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 10, 2026 (accessed Feb 11, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51718>>.