

Extractive Violence on Indigenous Country

Sami and Aboriginal Views on Conflicts and Power Relations with Extractive Industries

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Abstract

Asymmetrical conflicts and power relations between extractive industries and Indigenous groups often have devastating consequences for Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous groups are struggling to maintain their lands as Indigenous perspectives on connection to Country are frequently undervalued or dismissed in favour of extractivist ideologies. While this conflicted interface has been researched in various parts of the world, studies exploring conflicts and power relations with extractive industries from Indigenous perspectives are few.

This thesis is an international comparison aiming to illuminate situations of conflict and asymmetrical power relations caused by extractivism on Indigenous lands from new viewpoints. By drawing on two single case studies, the situations for Laevas reindeer herding Sami community in northern Sweden and Adnyamathanha Traditional Owners in South Australia are compared and contrasted. Yarning (a form of interviewing) is used as a method for data collection and in order to stay as true as possible to the research participants' own words a number of direct quotes are used. The analysis employs peace researcher Johan Galtung's concepts of cultural and structural violence as analytical tools to further explore the participants' experiences of interactions with extractive industries and industrial proponents, including governments. In addition, the thesis introduces the concept of extractive violence as a complement to Galtung's model. Extractive violence is defined as a form of direct violence against people and/or animals and nature caused by extractivism, which predominantly impacts peoples closely connected to land. The concepts of structural and cultural violence are understood as unjust societal structures and racist and discriminating attitudes respectively.

A number of main themes could be identified in the research participants' narratives. However, the most prominent on both continents was connections to Country and the threat that extractive violence posed to these connections.

The results show that although the expressions of cultural, structural and extractive violence experienced by the two Indigenous communities varied, the impacts were strikingly similar. Both communities identified extractive violence, supported by structural and cultural violence, as threats to the continuation of their societies and entire cultures. Furthermore, the results suggest that in order to address violence against Indigenous peoples and achieve conflict transformation, Indigenous and decolonising perspectives should be heard and taken into account.

Keywords

Aboriginal, Adnyamathanha, Australia, conflict, cultural violence, extractive industries, extractive violence, Indigenous peoples, Laevas čearru, LKAB, nuclear waste repository, Sami, structural violence, Sweden.

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