Beyond an Extractivist World: Why Imagining and Acting Upon Alternative Modes of Living are Crucial to Saving the Planet from Capitalism

People’s Health Movement (PHM)-Canada, PHM-Ecuador, and PHM-Ecosystems and Health Thematic Circle

Epigraph:
<[W]e are challenged not just to imagine, but to demand the emancipation of earth from capital. For the earth to live, capitalism must die.>¹

Part A: What is the problem?

1a. Why this working document?

Global extractivism – made up of the economic activities and power structures characteristic of large-scale mining, petroleum extraction, and related practices such as forestry, industrial agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries – is inseparable from capitalism.² Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta describes extractivism as an economic model that involves “dominion over Nature...expressed in the massive exploitation of natural resources, destined for the global market,” further identifying it as “one of the major causes” of his country’s underdevelopment.³ Issues as diverse as the climate and refugee crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, land and resource dispossession, militarism, neocolonialism, racism, and ever-growing inequality are part of a global order based on this model. This working document shares our experiences of advocacy, activism, and inquiry against extractivism as members of the Canadian and Ecuadorian chapters of the People’s Health Movement (PHM), a broad network of health justice activists across the world. We believe an anti-extractivist lens is useful for a wide range of contemporary progressive social movements, including health justice.

The extractive global order reflects and reinforces the power of both dominant and secondary political-economic players. Indeed, almost all wars in recent years are related to exploitative resource extraction, whether direct struggles for control of mining or petroleum resources or other forms of power grabs that are tolerated because of reliance on extractive resources.⁴ For example, the First and Second Congo wars, which resulted in over 5 million deaths some two decades ago, directly benefited over 100 mining transnational corporations (TNCs), including numerous Canadian companies, yet the Canadian and other governments

refused to investigate the role of these companies in the conflicts.\textsuperscript{5} More recently, the shameful Canadian sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, despite its relentless deadly attacks on Yemen’s population, has been defended by Canadian authorities in the name of abiding by contracts and ensuring the flow of Saudi oil to the West. Similar complicities were revealed upon Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which has been denounced by many Western governments and accorded hand-slapping sanctions, even as Western Europe continues to rely on Russian gas (used by Germany as part of its own “green transition” away from coal and nuclear plants). Not only does such continued purchase of Russian gas finance Russia’s horrific assault in Ukraine, but the Canadian government has hypocritically justified its companies’ providing maintenance for the gas pipeline so the German people can heat their homes during the winter, as though this issue somehow trumped the killing and destruction (and freezing) of Ukraine.

A similar logic of extractivism is evident in both the emergence of pandemics such as COVID-19, and in responses to them. Zoonotic disease crossover into human populations is dramatically increased by extractivist agro-industrial livestock production, as well as by increased pressure on wildlife habitats caused by land-grabbing for agri-business and resource extraction, and the macroeconomic reforms that enable these activities.\textsuperscript{6} After COVID-19 emerged, national, multilateral, and philanthropic responses prioritized corporate gain over human and ecosystem health. This played out most visibly in the corporate-philanthropy-PPP hijacking of a proposed open science approach to COVID therapeutics\textsuperscript{7} and the World Trade Organization’s refusal, extensive delay, and ultimately inadequate response to waiving patents on vaccines and other medical technologies, impelled by Big-Pharma-influenced European and North American governments.\textsuperscript{8} Extractive TNCs also bear responsibility for untold needless deaths related to the extreme shortage of medical oxygen in Peru among multiple other mining hubs across the world. Although oxygen is a crucial life-saving treatment for patients hospitalized with COVID-19, the oxygen used for mining and other extractive industries was prioritized because mining was deemed an essential industry. As a result, thousands of people who needed medical oxygen as a matter of life and death had no access to it, likely contributing to Peru’s ignominious record of the world’s highest COVID deaths per capita.\textsuperscript{9}

Economic and political elites, undergirded by the mainstream media, unsurprisingly play down how capitalism is inherently extractivist. Troublingly, some progressive activists, political parties, and scholars also ignore how extractivism perpetuates capitalism.\textsuperscript{10} By contrast,

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Indigenous movements have long led the way, including during the pandemic, via concrete actions and coherent worldviews that challenge extractivism.\textsuperscript{11} Such worldviews and related practices of continuity and reciprocity between humans and all other aspects of the natural world inform the possibilities of a different mode of living that threatens the extractive order.

There are two main sections in this working document. The first half focuses on the current state of extractivism and our relation to it as activists. We begin by presenting a critical political economy of health framework and discussing the connections among capitalism, extractivism, ill health and premature death. This exploration of the extractivist world order, and its relationship to colonialism/imperialism and present-day land grabbing and dispossession,\textsuperscript{12} shows how Canada plays a central role in these issues. We next describe struggles against Canadian extractivism in Ecuador and the solidarity teamwork involving the Canadian and Ecuadorian chapters of PHM within these efforts. Although we focus on Canadian extractivism because most of us are health scholars and practitioners based in Canada, many of the themes we explore apply to actions of other colonial powers, Eurocentric settler states, and postcolonial nation-states that have adopted and are subject to extractivist development models.\textsuperscript{13}

The second half of the working document draws attention to transformative ways of living that have the potential to overcome the global extractive order. We begin by reviewing two promising post-extractive imaginings: the Ecuadorian Indigenous vision of Sumak Kawsay/Kawsak Sacha and the Turtle Island (North America) Land Back movement. Informed by these learnings, as well as our critical political economy of health analysis of extractivism and experiences with anti-extractive Canada-Ecuador solidarity work, we attempt to identify the kinds of values that could guide the creation of a post-extractive future. We conclude with reflections on how activists might engage with these ideas and approaches.

1b. Who are we?

We are health researchers, practitioners, activists, students, teachers, and advocates from Canada and Ecuador. PHM is an organization guided by the principles of the People’s Charter for Health, and is involved in issues as wide-ranging as accessible primary healthcare, the corporatization of global health agencies, and the impact of extractive industries on community health. We recognize that because inequitable patterns of health are largely politically and societally determined, they can be radically changed. At PHM-Canada and PHM-Ecuador, we understand health as broadly inclusive of all life on the planet. In doing so, we grapple with what health justice means using an anti-extractive lens. Our work in this area has been inspired by the global PHM Extractive Industries Working Group: Statement To The 4\textsuperscript{th} Assembly of the People’s Health Movement. Our Canadian members feel a particular responsibility as health activists due to the Canadian state’s major role in hosting and promoting the mining industry and its violent extractive practices. We have practised solidarity with communities and organizations that are struggling against the often-predatory actions of Canadian mining companies. Our work incorporates critical (anti-capitalist, anti-oppressive, feminist, eco-socialist, anti-colonial, anti-


racist, queer) perspectives and seeks to respect Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and practices. We have done this both as individuals and collectively by documenting and publishing popular/media and academic works that critique Canadian policy and practices (e.g. Global Health Watch chapter). Our Latin American solidarity work aims to support community resistance efforts against the extractivist development models of both right wing and left wing governments. The work we do is often sparked and informed by community and organizational requests and appeals for urgent actions.

Our understanding of the relationship between extraction and neoliberal capitalism draws on our diverse personal and professional backgrounds, research activities, and ongoing mutual learning. We are learning how to integrate our anti-capitalist activism against extractivism in transnational solidarity with Indigenous and anti-colonial movements, especially in the Americas where Canadian extractivism is concentrated. Given our backgrounds, we see these issues through a health lens. This means we focus on how the global extractive order directly and indirectly contributes to ill health and premature death. We believe that a health lens is unifying because health is a universal concern and acts as a mobilizing tool wherein people’s health is defended in the context of people’s struggles for humane and dignified lives.

2a. Interpretive framework: critical political economy of health

Extractive activities such as industrial mining (open pit, underground, and deep sea), fossil fuel extraction, plantation agriculture, industrial fisheries and forestry, and hydroelectric power generation are all driven by the extractivist imperative of capitalism. This imperative comes from the impossible-to-satisfy demands of capitalists and capitalism to extract value from labour and the planet in a process of never-ending economic growth and profit-seeking. As such, resistance to extractivism, which includes pursuing radical alternatives to it, is central to “moving beyond capitalism.” In other words, without ending ecological plunder and exploitation—and endless consumption as a mode of living and way of life—the extractivist imperative and capitalist order will persist, even if reformed at the margins (e.g. involving income redistribution through commodity earnings).

Health is not separate from the global capitalist-extractive order. Rather, it is shaped by a set of social and political factors within this order. These include politics, institutions, and policies at both international and national levels, such as fiscal rules, foreign policy, domestic policing, and regulatory regimes intended to protect corporate and elite interests and the concentration of wealth and power. In practice, these activities may be ‘legal’ in that they follow the rules of capitalism laid out in modern ‘democratic state’ laws, or they may be extra-legal/illegal through manipulating, undermining or simply disregarding these laws. In other words, it is no accident that capitalism’s need for profit-oriented growth harms the natural environment and health by commodifying and extracting value from nature, including humans.

Our understanding of such dynamics is informed by a critical political economy of health (CPEH) approach that emphasizes the underlying societal and historical forces propelling global extraction (see Figure 1). A CPEH analysis highlights the role of power, wealth, and control over resources. It also looks at how dominant ideologies and accompanying political and economic/}

financial systems create asymmetries in power and resources that influence the policies and conditions (societal determinants of health) that shape patterns of (ill) health and health inequity at both personal and community levels.\(^{16}\)

\[\text{Figure 1:} \text{ Source: Birn et al., forthcoming CJLACS, Diagram of the political economy of global extraction and health (adapted from Schrecker et al., 2018 and Birn et al., 2017).}\]

\[\text{2b. Neoliberal capitalism, Canada’s role in global extractivism, and (ill) health}\]

Synergistically, pathways to individual and collective health harms are paved by international and national political and economic conditions that create, exacerbate, and perpetuate poverty through labour exploitation, workplace hazards, environmental degradation, and dispossession from land and livelihoods. These conditions also disrupt community cohesion and increase violence and social isolation. The CPEH framework also shows that people’s activism and political advocacy can reverse these health harms.\(^{17}\) This means that civil society


actions such as protecting resources, stopping extractive projects, and holding extractive corporations and the governments that support them to account, can protect health. A CPEH framing therefore enables us to recognize where along the pathways we can resist extractivism through local and transnational solidarity.

In the 1980s, the global political economy shifted into a neoliberal phase of capitalism. Neoliberal globalization, as it is often termed, is simply the latest chapter of more than five centuries of imperialism/colonialism, and capitalism writ large.\textsuperscript{18} Through the 1990s and beyond, nearly every country in Latin America implemented structural adjustment and successor programs, typically demanded by international lenders, in order to create favourable corporate investment conditions. Such measures generally worked by reducing environmental and labour regulations and land rights, especially for Indigenous, Afro-descended and other made-marginalized groups, with hugely destructive (and gendered) health effects. As a key component of such neoliberal reforms, low- and middle-income countries have been compelled by international financial institutions such the World Bank to weaken government regulations and create incentives to attract transnational extractive investment, all in the context of ever-accelerating globalized capitalism.\textsuperscript{19}

The spread of neoliberal reforms in Latin America, along with technological advances in mining thus stimulated a surge in transnational mining investment starting in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{20} Global neoliberalization of mining was also encouraged by new mining codes, scaled-back regulatory regimes, scaled-back labor codes and environmental policies, revision of laws to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI), and rehabilitated “free mining” laws.\textsuperscript{21} The resulting boom led to new forms of capital accumulation through ever greater exploitation and dispossession of land. The boom generally concentrated the resulting social and environmental harms in ‘sacrifice zones’ typically Indigenous regions, within the countries where extractive activities take place.\textsuperscript{22}

While such global capitalist dynamics are certainly shaped by major powers such as the US and other large economies, Canada has played a unique role in neocolonial and globalized capitalist extractivism. In contrast to Canada’s (unfounded) reputation as a well-meaning and peaceful middle power that influences the global order through diplomacy, the Canadian state was built through the theft of Indigenous land, and persists by continuing this theft at home and


abroad. Viewed in this light, Canada exists because it robs and hoards resources through violent extraction: initially involving pelts and lumber, and more recently via mining, oil, and gas. Indeed, self-congratulatory rhetoric notwithstanding, Canada is a capitalist and imperialist state. Under every political party ever in power, the Canadian government has facilitated the growth of the extractive sector. Indeed, over the past 25 years, the pace of extraction by Canadian mining companies domestically and overseas has rapidly accelerated. Today Canada is host to almost 50% of the world’s publicly listed mineral exploration and mining companies, a level which has reached 75% in recent years. Moreover, 70% of global mining shares are traded in Canada and 31% of mining exploration capital is raised by the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX and TSXV) alone. While British and Australian stock markets host mining companies with greater total capitalization, the TSX and TSXV specialize in financing high-risk mining exploration ‘junior’ companies, as well as the ‘senior’ companies representing Canada’s world-leading precious metals mining sector.

The TSX raises transnational capital for mining companies globally— and is attractive to them because of its notoriously lax regulatory structures; notably, Canadian capitalists and their foreign partners own and control the majority of TSX-listed mining companies. As elsewhere, the insatiable quest for greater profits leads Canadian capital/ists, protected and promoted by the Canadian state, to pursue resource exploitation where accumulation is most feasible and efficient. Canada has aggressively pursued free trade agreements (FTAs) with whichever Latin American partners will weaken state sovereignty by prioritizing the rights of capital (including mining FDI) over health, human rights, and environmental protection. Further to this, Canadian development aid has been redirected to promote Canadian mining interests. For example,

31 Gordon and Webber, Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America.
Canada funded the development of new mining codes in Colombia, Guyana, Honduras, and Bolivia, each serving to diminish countries’ labour, social, and environmental regulations around mining. Honduras’s 2013 mining law allowed mining companies to use unlimited amounts of water despite lack of water access for many citizens. It also prohibited the creation of mining-free zones, and only required one community to be consulted about a mining development, even if multiple communities surround the mining site. As Grinspun and Mills (2015) state, “by working behind the scenes, Canadian officials can truthfully state that Canadian companies are following foreign laws, while conveniently omitting who is shaping these laws and, most importantly, in whose interest.” Under the FTAs Canada has championed since the 1990s, Canadian mining companies were enabled to take legal action against poor countries. For example, in 2009 Oceana Gold/Pacific Rim launched a $77 million Investor-State Dispute Settlement lawsuit against El Salvador – essentially for the right to poison that country’s main water source – that El Salvador eventually won after 7 years, but which sent a chilling message to other countries seeking to protect their natural resources.

Canadian and other high-income country-based mining companies also take advantage of what is often weaker oversight abroad by using environmental techniques that are outlawed domestically in their home countries. In parallel, the Canadian government has explicitly declined to regulate its transnational mining industry in Latin America (and beyond). When mining companies are accused of serious crimes, often indirectly through subsidiaries or hired security personnel, Canadian courts have (until recently in the case of lawsuits against HudBay Minerals and Tahoe Resources) been unwilling to hear cases brought forward, citing a lack of jurisdiction or, hypocritically, asserting principles of non-interference in the sovereignty of other

35 Grinspun and Mills, “Canadaw, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations.”
36 Grinspun and Mills, “Canadaw, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations.”
37 Grinspun and Mills, “Canadaw, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations,” 140.
38 Sadly, these struggles are not permanent: the current rightwing government is quietly abrogating the law: https://elfaro.net/es/202112/columnas/25886/%C2%BFeStamos-frente-al-silencioso-regreso-de-la-miner%C3%ADa-en-El-Salvador.htm
35 Grinspun and Mills, “Canada, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations.”
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Other countries are taking up the mantle: Honduras update: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-60570831: Feb 2022, Newly elected Honduras government banned open-pit mining—“lack of an executive decree leaves the initiative without the official support of the executive branch, and with little clarity on when and how the decision will be applied.” https://pibcanada.org/2022/07/13/pbi-honduras-report-highlights-canadian-backed-mining-law-as-the-most-regressive-in-the-region/
41 Grinspun and Mills, “Canada, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations.”
countries. Instead of holding companies to account, the Canadian government actively supports private mining interests in Latin America in a number of ways: tax subsidies and incentives; financing and insurance through the Export Development Corporation; Canada Pension Plan funds invested in mining (which implicates nearly all working Canadians in mining transgressions abroad); tied foreign aid through Global Affairs Canada (and predecessor agencies); funding for the establishment of mining-NGO partnerships; direct Canadian Embassy support and cover-ups for mining companies; public relations campaigns to support the industry; and, through lack of Canadian legislation on extraterritorial activity, amounting to protection for companies that violate human rights and Indigenous sovereignty.

Canadian mining companies have also taken advantage of pre-existing oppression and conflict in the countries where they operate, using unstable or weak political contexts to operate with minimal oversight. The violent actions committed by Canadian companies are hidden within local conflict, as in the case of conflicts in Colombia. The use of subsidiaries helps to further divert responsibility away from Canadian TNCs. Since the early 2000s, Canadian mining companies have been involved in approximately one third of the region’s 171 mining-related conflicts, which is the world’s worst record. More than 1,000 environmentalists and land defenders were killed in the region between 2002 and 2017. Community members who oppose mines are often criminalized, and their depiction as lawless or dangerous is used by the state as justification for militarizing and increasing police presence at mining sites.

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43 Grinspun and Mills, “Canada, Extractivism, and Hemispheric Relations.”
51 In the first step of criminalizing dissent, governments declare mining to be in the national interest and promulgate a pro-mining development discourse; extensive public education campaigns promote mining as critical to job creation and access to foreign capital. This discourse allows for opposition to mining from affected communities, unionized workers, and, sometimes, allies, to be labeled as anti-patriotic, anti-development, backward, or against jobs. Protest or civil disobedience is rendered as criminal activity or terrorism. Mining frequently divides communities, with pro-mining citizens or organizations perpetuating the portrayal of anti-mining activists as radicals, rebels, and criminals. Those who engage in civil disobedience are often arrested without charge and can accrue large financial burdens. The depiction of protestors as law-breakers, terrorists, or security threats not only undermines the legitimacy of their cause but also provides the state with justification for increased militarization and police repression (Moore et al., 2015).
52 Moore, Jones, and Morena, “In the National Interest? Criminalization of Land and Environment Defenders in the Americas.”
Conflicts involving Canadian companies attest to Canada’s role as the largest overall investor nation in Latin America’s mining sector and, from 2007-2012, the region’s second largest external source of foreign direct investment (FDI). In Peru in 2013, Canadian companies owned 180 of 229 mining properties; in Colombia in 2013, they comprised 65% of all companies engaged in mining exploration; and in Mexico in the early 2000s, 75-80% of exploratory mining ventures were run by Canadian companies. The size of Canadian-owned mining concessions in the region is also noteworthy: more than 20% of the concessions held by Canadian mining firms are larger than 25,000 ha, and a few extend to over a million hectares, which is a significant percentage of national territory. While the industry often works directly with Latin America states, the Canadian state is highly involved in these arrangements. For example, the Canadian government’s Trade Commissioner Service posts mining investment opportunities, touting Peru as the 5th ranked country in Canadian mining assets abroad with 71 Canadian companies operating and Mexico ranked 7th with 138 active Canadian companies there.

Mining activities almost always involve dispossession and state-sanctioned violence. These well-documented practices and abuses include: severe environmental violence to local ecologies, labour rights abuses, securitization of mining operations that leads to private security crimes such as rape and murder, massive displacement of communities due to dispossession of land, and violation of Indigenous sovereignty. As per the CPEH framework outlined above, the health and community consequences of such predatory mining practices are extensively documented: toxic exposures and heavy metal poisoning resulting in lung disease;

53 Gordon and Webber, Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America.
55 Gordon and Webber, Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America.
various cancers, reproductive issues and skin conditions; increased incidence of sexually transmitted infections and substance abuse; gastrointestinal effects amongst miners and communities in the vicinity of mining operations; mental distress and illness; and loss of connection with land and water, which harms cultural survival and spiritual wellbeing, water security and food sovereignty, among other effects.62

2c. Mining “corporate social responsibility” and the health sector

Most of the companies involved in mining-related community conflicts hide their predatory practices behind corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies and claims of a “social license” to locate there63 Battling rhetorically with their critics, mining corporations have put enormous effort into maintaining their profitable access to resources by portraying themselves as positive contributors to society.64 The concept of “sustainable” mining, for example, attributes negative impacts of mining to a few bad-actor companies and to inadequate ‘governance’ of mining in the global South, rather than to systemic issues intrinsic to the corporate mining enterprise.65 Moreover, mining TNCs hold that these problems can be easily fixed through CSR measures together with neoliberal reforms to mining codes.66

Canada’s mining industry has been at the forefront of CSR efforts designed to defuse community and government resistance to mining, and generally legitimate the sector and its supposedly natural and beneficial role for Canadian and global economies and societies. CSR efforts in Canada help the mining sector shield itself from criticism and promote a positive self-image via “philanthropic” support to hospitals and other health-related entities connected to Canadian universities.67 Funding health research and healthcare innovation for Canadians is a deeply cynical ploy given the unconscionable harms posed by Canadian mining companies to the physical, environmental, and psychosocial health of people in mining-affected communities. For example, from 1993 to 2017 the Peter and Melanie Munk Charitable Foundation (whose endowment draws from profits of Barrick Gold, the world’s second largest [formerly largest] gold mining company, with numerous controversial mines in Latin America and worldwide)

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64 Coumans, “Minding the ‘Governance Gaps.’”


67 Brisbois et al., “Corporate Sponsorship of Global Health Research.”
donated more than 175 million to the Munk Cardiac Centre at University Health Network/Toronto General Hospital.\textsuperscript{68} Starting in 2016, Canadian TNC IAMGOLD (which at the time had mining projects in Suriname and Ecuador) began partnering with the Department of Psychiatry and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) at the University of Toronto for an annual gala to raise funds for research around prevention, early detection, and awareness raising regarding psychosis in youth.\textsuperscript{69} Perhaps most insidiously, the industry-wide Mining4Life initiative funds global child health research and pilot programs to prevent childhood stunting and sepsis at Sick Kids hospital (Toronto) and BC Children’s hospital, respectively.\textsuperscript{70}

These tax-deductible donations to healthcare, education, and medical research – minuscule sums compared to profits from mining – bring respectability to the mining sector. Moreover, mining philanthropy reinforces the complicity of the very institutions that should be challenging health-harming and destructive mining practices both within Canada and abroad. CSR actions also insidiously perpetuate Canadians comfort with our identity as a global mining power, with extraction of resources from Indigenous territories in Turtle Island and across the Majority world portrayed as a desirable or at least inevitable aspect of modern life.\textsuperscript{71} Such narratives extend the longstanding nation-building account that makes the entire national landmass a storehouse of resources available to generate wealth for first British and later Canadian interests, with Indigenous presence on the land either denied or deemed irrelevant in the name of advancing settler colonialism.\textsuperscript{72} These narratives and attitudes enable Canadians to tolerate and even celebrate our imperialist role in the extractive economy.\textsuperscript{73}

While deeply cynical, promotion of ‘sustainable mining’ narratives and other sophisticated elements of the mining industry’s slick CSR campaigns effectively illustrate the degree to which community resistance to extraction has forced mining corporations to counter or evade the powerful arguments of the resisters. Indeed, Latin American communities have engaged in long struggles against transnational capital’s extractive assault on their territories and bodies, part of sustained and widespread resistance from mining-affected communities and their civil society allies worldwide.\textsuperscript{74} Communities residing in areas targeted for mining “development” have long mobilized against mining, defiantly expressing their opposition to the exploitation, degradation, and dispossession inherent to extractivism. The considerable ingenuity and money devoted to CSR attest to the genuine threat to corporate profits posed by resistance in mining-affected communities, together with solidarity actions of supportive organizations and governments. In the next section we discuss our own attempts to hold Canadian mining companies to account in partnership with Ecuadorian activists and mining-affected communities.


\textsuperscript{70} Karen Kornelsen, “Mining4Life Has Raised over $11 Million for Charity,” 2013, https://www.miningandenergy.ca/ontario/article/mining4life_has_raised_over_11_million_for_charity/.


\textsuperscript{73} Brisbois et al., “Mining, Colonial Legacies and Neoliberalism: A Political Ecology of Health Knowledge”; Butler, Colonial Extractions; Barbara Heron, \textit{Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative} (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).

Case study of health and anti-extractivism in Ecuador and transnational Canadian solidarity

Most of the co-authors of this working document have been involved in PHM-Canada’s cooperation with resistance to Canadian mining in Ecuador, in partnership with PHM-Ecuador and the Ecuadorian Yasunidxs activist group. This experience is particularly instructive because it involves the global extractive order’s exercise of power at multiple levels (as per Figure 1), with the struggle’s ripple effects reaching far beyond the local level. It also brought PHM-Canada and PHM-Ecuador into an ongoing collective effort to influence government authorities in Canada and Ecuador, and to advance proposals for post-extractivist scenarios.

In 2007, Rafael Correa was elected Ecuador’s President: propelling him into office was his revolución ciudadana, which echoed the larger agenda of Ecuador’s Indigenous, labor and environmental social movements. Indeed, Correa’s first term began propitiously with a 2008 Constituent Assembly that developed a world-renowned Constitution providing rights to nature and making health a human right. These developments were accompanied by substantial increases to health and social spending and public infrastructure, albeit without significant wealth redistribution. Early on, the Constituent Assembly passed a Mining Mandate to halt all mining concessions, and also granted amnesty to earth defenders. But in 2009 Correa’s administration passed a Mining Law that resumed concessions, and resistance to extraction was increasingly criminalized as part of the regime’s subsequent aggressive promotion of large-scale mining. By the time he left office, more than 600 social leaders had been persecuted and criminalized, among them many who were resisting extractive projects.

Events in the Amazonian Yasuní region are emblematic of the Correa government’s turnaround. In 2007, the Energy Ministry, in alliance with eco-environmental activists such as Acción Ecológica, proposed an interesting initiative: to leave oil underground in the Yasuní Ishpingo, Tiputini, Tambococha natural reserve, located in the Orellana province of the Amazon region, in exchange for international financing to support Ecuador’s domestic spending. The Yasuní ITT initiative, as it became known, was crafted collectively between local activists and Correa’s government. The government portrayed it as a signature activity, despite its increasing promotion of mega-mining and expansion of fossil fuel extraction in the Southern Amazon.

In the end, only a tiny fraction of the anticipated international support for the Yasuní ITT initiative materialized, and soon after being re-elected in 2013 Correa terminated the initiative and announced plans to exploit petroleum reserves in Yasuní. In response, a collective of environmental activists under the name Yasunidxs quickly formed. Youth protests were organized across the country to defend the collective rights of uncontacted Indigenous peoples living in the Yasuní region and in defense of a biodiverse zone. Yasunidxs argued that the Ecuadorian people should be consulted about whether extraction should take place. More than

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77 D Murcia, A Faro, and A LeBlanc, “Criminalización de La Protesta Social Frente a Proyectos Extractivos En Ecuador” (Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH), Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU), Fundación Regional de Asesoría de Derechos Humanos (INREDH), 2015).
750,000 signatures demanding a popular consultation were collected, but Correa’s government (through a Consejo Nacional Electoral) nullified at least 60% of the signatures without cause. By March 2016, extraction of crude oil by State company Petroamazonas began in the ITT region, despite the fact that it threatened the very survival of the non-contacted Tagaeri and Taromenane.

In addition to their ongoing petroleum-related resistance, Yasunidxs have mobilized against the aggressive promotion of (often Canadian) mega-mining by Correa and his successors, Lenín Moreno and current President Guillermo Lasso. In September 2019, Yasunidxs Guapondelig (the ancestral name of the city of Cuenca), a local group in the South of the country, initiated a process supporting the Water Council in the province of Azuay for a popular consultation regarding the placement of mining activities around water sources of the Cuenca Canton (county). Building on pre-existing Canada-Ecuador relationships, an alliance consisting of PHM-Canada, PHM-Ecuador, and Yasunidxs Cuenca prepared an *amicus curiae* (‘friend of the court’) brief for Ecuador’s Constitutional Court. The brief detailed the health impacts of mining extraction in Quimsacocha, a major planned INV Metals/IAMGOLD mine in Azuay.

While the petition for a popular consultation was denied, a revised proposal for a popular consultation was approved by the Constitutional Court and in February 2021, 80% of the citizens of Cuenca, Ecuador’s third largest city, voted to prohibit mining activities in the watersheds of several rivers that provide water to city residents.

Still, the scope and impact of the water referendum remain disputed: Lasso’s neoliberal government transferred the mine to Dundee Precious Metals (also a Canadian TNC, which acquired the mine in 2021) to begin its exploitation phase, disregarding the popular consultation’s results. While activist groups continue struggling for the right to water, an important purpose of our PHM-Canada/PHM-Ecuador alliance remains as salient as ever: to work together so that Canadian investors and the broader Canadian public are made aware of longstanding resistance to Canadian mining in Ecuador and why it persists. The Cuenca organizations Yasunidxs Guapondelig and Cabildo por el Agua continued to demand recognition of the Popular consultation vote in 2022, denouncing the Environment Ministry’s inaction and criticizing four local Universities that launched “sustainability” events financed by mining companies and consultants.79

The Cuenca consultation has helped to inform and inspire other anti-extractive struggles in Ecuador. Quito sin Minería (Quito without Mining), for example, is a non-partisan collective of organizations and urban residents defending the Andean Choco biosphere against Australian, Canadian, British, and Ecuadorian companies granted concessions, calling attention to the devastating effects that mining will have in the northwestern part of the Metropolitan District of Quito.80 The campaign for a popular consultation in Quito was delayed in 2022 by the National Electoral Council, which then invalidated (once again without cause) over 60% of the almost half million signatures. Quito sin Minería quickly denounced this anomalous process,81 but given the eight-year delay for the Electoral Tribunal to eventually decide in favor of the Popular Consultation on Yasuni ITT exploitation (during which time oil exploitation of the region continued unimpeded), the struggle remains long-term and decidedly uphill.

3b. Health and the lessons of anti-extractivism in Ecuador

Efforts such as those of Quito sin Minería and Yasuníxs Guapondelig (including international solidarity through the People’s Health Movement) represent important examples of resistance. Along with comparable popular consultation efforts against other extractivist governments in Latin America, the efforts in Ecuador show the limits to seeking progress through state institutions and processes organized around centralized power and authoritarian figures. As studies of environmental justice movements have amply documented, Indigenous and other marginalized communities often opt against pursuing justice through lawsuits, popular consultations, or other state-centred vehicles to avoid legitimizing (and becoming bogged down in) the very structures generating the injustices in question.

A related lesson is the importance of challenging the development narrative, even when it is expressed under the aegis of a supposedly progressive government that promotes certain redistributive programs. During his time in office, Correa’s government emphatically linked extractivism to Ecuador’s development, for example through nation-wide mass communication campaigns proclaiming resource extraction as key to augmenting health and social spending to enable national progress. Other “Pink Tide” governments (elected across Latin America in the 2000s and 2010s representing progressive and redistributive agendas) have pursued similarly contradictory policies that promise improvements in health and social conditions yet rely on extractivist development models that are harmful to local populations and ecosystems writ large.

These governments claim that substantial investments in health and social services depend on mining and petroleum extraction as necessary evils to advance desirable wealth redistribution and social well-being policies. In the case of the health sector in Ecuador, however, the increased budget strengthened the public health care system but simultaneously supported corporate interests as patients—a public subsidies—were transferred to the private sector. Moreover, cuts to social security funding led to what is today a collapsed system.

Indeed, the neoliberal character of Correa’s health sector reforms demonstrates that the “citizens’ revolution” was hardly a deep societal transformation. It was fuelled by revenues from historically high petroleum prices and did not involve long-needed wealth redistribution measures such as reforms to the country’s highly skewed tax structures. An additional piece of the puzzle was increasing reliance on China’s investments in Ecuador’s oil fields, pipelines, port operations, hydroelectric plants, and mining activities. As elsewhere, China financed (through massive loans to Ecuador) these extraction projects from the exploration phase through on-the-ground operations, along with required transportation infrastructure and hydroelectric projects to provide energy for these processes. From 2009 to 2016, 8 long-term oil contracts (not subject to public tender) were signed with Chinese companies Petrochina and Unipec, allowing partial early disbursement of the funds while substantially indebting the Ecuadorian government, which

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had to take on seven promissory loans with China, all tied to oil as collateral/warranty.\(^85\) Ecuador’s Chinese debt currently stands at $4.4 billion and must be repaid by 2027, including via 28 million barrels of crude oil. While Correa promoted involvement with China’s nominally communist government based on the two countries’ purportedly shared opposition to neoliberal capitalism, this nevertheless reproduces patterns of foreign and domestic elite extraction of wealth and resources from rural and marginalized peoples and regions of the country.\(^86\)

The inequitable flows of resources and wealth surrounding extractivism in Ecuador, now substantially driven by Chinese involvement, illustrate perhaps the most sobering lesson we have learned from our anti-extractivist activities there. The development frame used by Correa and his successors to justify extractivism has taken an implicitly and sometimes explicitly racist form, often dismissing Indigenous and environmentalist opposition as ‘childlike’; this reproduces white supremacist narratives that have long guided extractivist development in Ecuador (and the world).\(^87\) The dehumanization and commodification of both nature and Indigenous peoples reveals the truth behind myths that ‘progress’ (even socialist progress) can be achieved through extractivism. Such myths fail to take into account how extractive activities, directly and indirectly (by worsening the climate crisis), destroy nomadic and isolated modes of life of Indigenous peoples under the racist guise of modernization. Ultimately, the logic of accumulation through extractive processes ruins the possibility of long-term survival. This is the case even if such governments finance healthcare systems with revenues of extractive activities because the latter activities themselves are fundamental causes of poor health. To wit, how many hospitals does the Ecuadorian Amazon region need to counteract the higher incidence of cancer due to continuous exposure to oil and mining effluent contamination.\(^88\)

**Part B: Ways forward? Activism and post-extractive imaginings for healthier communities and societies**

4. **Imaginings**

Informed by critical political economy analysis of the health effects of extractivism and our experiences confronting them via Canada-Ecuador activist collaboration, we turn to finding lessons or strategies for pursuing post-extractivist futures. The need to do so is underscored by global environmental crises such as climate change and other characteristics of the era frequently (though problematically) termed ‘the Anthropocene’.\(^89\) Additional urgency is provided by the

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dominance of technocratic and status quo visions for a supposedly fairer and more sustainable future, which only reproduce the inequitable political economic status quo and its devastating health impacts. New, simplified answers to the Earth's crises such as developing technology to solve climate change share the same line of thought underlying extractivism: progress. This is seen in the IMF’s pro-growth green(washed) discourse: “The world’s historic pivot toward curbing carbon emissions is likely to spur unprecedented demand for some of the most crucial metals used to generate and store renewable energy in a net-zero emissions by 2050 scenario.”

By contrast, we argue that a post-carbon (fossil fuel) world is not enough. Development, growth and modernization fueled by extractive industries, even when portrayed as a redistribution of income or transition to renewable energy, only strengthen the capitalist state. “Green energy” transitions do not stop the underlying extractive modes of life that drive present-day war and environmental climate catastrophes that lead to health crises and misery. Green New Deal-type proposals that call for slashing or substituting fossil fuel use to address climate change do not consider the destruction posed by hydroelectricity, or lithium and other mineral/metal mining to produce batteries for electric vehicles. Above all they fail to take on capitalist modes of living that by their very nature require extraction, exploitation, never-ending production, profit, consumption, and destruction. Indeed, green energy alternatives will only delay and extend the crises of extractive capitalism, including war, not resolve them. In such a scenario, the brutal burden of extractivism of minerals to build a “greener world” in the North will invariably be borne on the shoulders of the Global South, especially by Indigenous populations, with Indigenous people in the global North also seeing their remaining territories increasingly threatened by the constant need for ‘critical minerals.’

In 2015 Noam Chomsky highlighted the protagonism of Indigenous peoples and their territories on the frontlines averting a global catastrophe: “All over the world, it’s the Indigenous communities trying to hold us back: First Nations in Canada, Indigenous people in Bolivia, Aborigines in Australia, tribal people in India. It’s phenomenal all over the world that those who we call ‘primitive’ are trying to save those of us who we call ‘enlightened’ from total disaster.” In search of guidance that contests and replaces capitalism and its well-known cannibalizing ways and challenges dominant visions of societal and sustainability transitions such as the Green New Deal, we review, and seek to learn from, Indigenous-led visions of post-extractive worlds from our respective homelands: Sumak Kawsay/Kawsak Sacha (Ecuador) and Land Back (Turtle Island / Canada).


As discussed in section 3, the policies of the self-declared ‘socialist’ Correa government in Ecuador amounted to state modernization based on an extractivist order, despite constitutional and political promises to stand by Indigenous and peasant proposals for ways of living.

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93 Nancy Fraser, Cannibal Capitalism How Our System Is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet—and What We Can Do About It (Verso, 2022).
summarized as Sumak Kawsay (translated from Kichwa as Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir) in a ‘plurinational state.’ This extractivist reframing of Sumak Kawsay took away its original Indigenous cosmovision, departing from its powerful, coherent proposal for post-extractivist futures. Sumak Kawsay, a prominently Kichwa worldview, sees nature as a living being that is both a subject of care and holder of rights. This is very different from the instrumentalization of nature (and peoples traditionally considered to be part of it) by capitalism (see Table 1).

The Sumak Kawsay approach is based on communal and family property, satisfying needs and re-establishing alliances to guarantee access to resources and collective rights. It prioritizes people and their relationships to the community and the sacred connection with territory or land (the commons). Here, food sovereignty is a practice of collective health that includes resistance to commercialized/corporatized diets, which is ever-more difficult, including in Indigenous communities that have previously maintained traditional diets. In the commons, we can witness principles of reciprocity, collective property, relation and coexistence with nature, social accountability to others, and consensus building. The commons – says Floresmilo Simbaña, an Indigenous Ecuadorian historian and Indigenous movement leader – offers a concrete model that opposes neoliberal capitalism and the development it entails.

Although often associated with Andean Communities (Ecuador, Bolivia), this communal worldview (Sumak Kawsay) is not specific to them. Indeed, in the Amazon jungle, Kichwa-speaking Sarayaku peoples invoke *Kawsak Sacha* (the Living Forest, or sacred territory) as a pillar of Sumak Kawsay. When asked to define health, Sarayaku elders often say: the forest is health, the forest is life (*la selva es vida*). Kawsak Sacha describes all living beings and the web of relations they have with each other: of human beings with plants; with the supreme beings who protect the forest; with waterfalls, lagoons, swamps, mountains, and rivers; in summary, with the Living Forest as a whole. In the Living Forest, the economic system is an ecological web; the natural world is also a social world. In this sacred territory and within all those interconnected relations, health is produced; Kawsak Sacha emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually revitalizes. The preservation of the territory of Indigenous peoples entails not only necessary environmental conservation (for example, CO2 emission reductions) but also the material and spiritual relations that Sarayaku peoples establish in the Living Forest with its other inhabitants.

Contrasts between capitalism and Indigenous cosmovisions involving Sumak Kawsay and Kawsak Sacha show how dominant development models and capital accumulation are linked (see Table 1). The co-optation of Buen Vivir by the governments of Correa and his successors has translated into some 15% of Ecuador’s territory being granted in concessions to transnational mining. Differences in worldview between Sumak Kawsay and capitalism are clear from their divergent understandings of health. In the medico-health realm, adherence to the medical industrial complex tends to pathologize physiological processes as the responsibility of individuals and to make biomedical knowledge superior. For example, mainstream medicine/society considers the choice of home births as uninformed; meanwhile, the problems of

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96 Arteaga-Cruz, “Buen Vivir (Sumak Kawsay).”
malnutrition, pesticide exposures and stress-related non-communicable diseases are often attributed to behavioural issues, overlooking people’s reliance (with few alternatives) on a food system built by agribusiness and free trade agreements.

The Sumak Kawsay vision as articulated by Indigenous nationalities, in contrast, presents an entirely different mode of living. Proposed in Ecuador, this notion is present in various Indigenous and peasant communities around the globe. In our present-day world that is so close to sowing its own destruction, the hope and vision of another possible future is of utmost importance, not as an unachievable reform of what now exists, but as a new way of living—a realizable dream—of what we can become.

Table 1: Capitalist world view compared to Sumak Kawsay

Escuela de Gobierno y Políticas Públicas para las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPITALISM</th>
<th>KICHWA: SUMAK KAWSAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Property is privately held, and capital privately accumulated</td>
<td>• Property is held collectively or in common, family property (ancient commons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual subject (mainly economic rights – Homo economicus)</td>
<td>• Collective subject (collective rights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeks individual economic benefit</td>
<td>• Seeks community well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accumulation</td>
<td>• Institutions of social reciprocity / [radical] redistribution (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Market freedom</td>
<td>• Market: space of exchange of surplus and to supplement needs (trueque).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demands economic growth</td>
<td>• Human being as a part of nature (sacred reciprocity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Private business predominance</td>
<td>• Based on needs satisfaction and establishment of alliances to guarantee that all community members have equitable access to resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Production towards satisfying needs (wants) created by companies (new illnesses)</td>
<td>• Based on market rules: supply and demand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4b. The Land Back movement in Turtle Island

Land Back, emerging from Indigenous struggles for self-determination in Turtle Island (North America), seeks to return (stewardship of) the land to Indigenous peoples, not as a form of conservation, but to be governed under Indigenous modes of living and laws as part of a global process of liberation for Indigenous peoples. Land in this sense refers to more than just the physical soil; it includes the resources (air, water, forests, fauna etc.) and living ecosystems that nourish and are nourished by the land, and the social relations integral to this process. Land Back emphasizes the ability of the land to provide all that is needed for human existence -

food, shelter, spirituality, medicine, community - when it is respected, cared for, and used responsibly. Some Indigenous people have articulated tangible ways to enact Land Back within our current system, including paying rent to Indigenous people, land trusts and taxes, and access to safe and adequate housing, mental health services, community resources based in harm reduction, and an end to criminalization (defunding police).

Yet arguably these measures are more about redress for land theft under the current system of capitalism involving transactional capital exchange. Instead, Land Back reimagines the relationships between people and land: it is entirely incompatible with the capitalist model of private land ownership, and with settler social and economic systems based on oppression, exploitation, and individualism. An additional crucial tool of colonialism was the imposition of heteropatriarchy on Indigenous peoples, removing women, trans, two-spirit, and non-binary people from decision making and governance of the land, with women and nature alike viewed as exploitable commodities to serve the economy and interests of settlers. This phenomenon, aligns with the broader ethos of resource extraction, wherein, as noted above, gendered dynamics of power are warped, and represent a profound threat to Indigenous health and well-being.

Resource extraction projects on Indigenous land clearly show the tension between visions of Indigenous sovereignty based on directing more of the profits of extractivism to Indigenous-controlled social programs, and those rejecting the extractivist model altogether. For example, the Wet’suwet’en fight against pipelines running through their territory (that will undoubtedly cause spills and damage and only worsen the climate crisis) is up against colonially imposed decision-making processes that favour the Canadian state and extractive companies, while deepening divisions within Indigenous communities. Although ‘consent’ from Indigenous communities is required for projects to proceed both legally and to maintain public legitimacy, extraction companies and the Canadian state are engaged in “manufacturing consent,” as Turner puts it, by disregarding Indigenous forms of government and decision making, imposing settler structures of governance, and legitimizing consent through such imposed structures.

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104 Gouldhawke, “Land as a Social Relationship.”
Viewed through a holistic Indigenous well-being lens, Land Back holds profound implications for health in relation to extractivism and its accompanying broader neoliberal and settler colonial capitalist structures. A range of Canadian Indigenous scholars and communities have shared detailed models, based on centuries-old Indigenous wisdom, that show health and wellbeing as inseparable from the health of the land; this knowledge is now imitated, often without acknowledgement, by contemporary western fields such as Ecohealth, One Health and Planetary Health.109 As Anishinabek (Biigtigong) health geographer Chantelle Richmond explains, good relationships among people and the land foster Indigenous health via overlapping pathways that foreshadow and extend Western medical understandings of social and ecological determinants of health.110 Beyond obvious health-promoting features such as freedom from toxicological contaminants, uncompromised land access and connection enables livelihoods and nutrition; promotes physical activity via participation in traditional on-the-land cultural practices; and enables related spiritual and intergenerational knowledge transmission practices that are recognized as a determinant of cultural continuity and mental health.111 Land-based learning and healing practices are a means to accomplishing ‘environmental repossession’ among First Nations facing the cumulative impacts of historic traumas such as residential schooling and land dispossession, and contemporary economic development activities including large-scale mines and other extractivist projects.112 One such effort is the Buffalo Treaty, which brings together Indigenous nations in an ecosystem now divided by the US-Canada colonial border to return buffalo to the North American plains, and thus restore the ways of life and economies humans built in reciprocity around the creatures.113 Land-based practices are also central to anti-extractivist mobilizations against the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline through Wet’suwet’en territory described above, and against hydraulic fracturing (fracking) on traditional territories of the Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick.114

4c. Reflecting back … and ahead…

Our experience of Canada-Ecuador and other Canada-Latin America anti-extractivist solidarity as an environmental/community health-promoting strategy has provided useful organizing lessons and confirmed that community-driven strategies can lead to important, if temporary, victories and begin to engage grassroots struggles in prefigurative politics. That said, community-level resistance to extractivism exists within a system of imperial logic, state


complicity and associated dispossession, conflict and violence – all of which are structural drivers of health and social inequalities. This underscores the importance of imagining and bringing about a post-extractive future as per the guidance provided by Sumak Kawsay / Kawsak Sacha and Land Back. The unequivocally anti-colonial motivations of Indigenous visions in both Turtle Island and Ecuador, coupled with their insistence on reciprocal and caring relationships among people and the land, motivate strategies that go well beyond reformist tweaks to the existing extractive capitalist order, such as switching from fossil fuel to “green” extraction.

Such insights resonate with Tuck and Yang’s reminder that “decolonization is not a metaphor” and must involve the actual restitution of land to Indigenous sovereignty and stewardship.115 When decolonization is understood metaphorically, it is reduced to critical consciousness without tangible actions. Heeding this call, our analysis in this working document points us towards responses to extractivism that go beyond a ‘politics of recognition’ in which Indigenous empowerment and environmental justice for other made-marginalized groups are thought to be achievable within existing state structures.116

These lessons are especially necessary in light of powerful narratives surrounding the practice of healthcare and health research in Canada and comparable liberal democracies. As PHM members, we understand our positionality as influenced by varying degrees of embeddedness in the health and higher education sectors in our countries and within capitalist social dynamics more generally. The settler colonial extractivist Canadian state has effects that ripple through our classrooms, clinics, publications, research, and other activities.117 As such, Canada’s role as an extractivist society implicates us, and our institutional and social class origins, in the project of violent dispossession through which the Canadian state came to be and continues to operate. We are similarly cognizant of the consequences of centuries-long symbioses between (racial, patriarchal, ecocidal) capitalism and Western health professions and disciplines.118 We thus question narratives of benevolence (or ill-informed altruism) promoted by Canadian health and policy/political actors towards Indigenous peoples and those living in ‘developing countries,’ which bolster the colonial project and portray resistance to extraction as misguided or romantic nonsense. In challenging extractivism we also strive to debunk the pillars of capitalist ideologies in terms of their fundamental paradox. On one level, market-based social relations and the imperative of economic growth are inextricable from capitalism and necessary for it to survive. Moreover, extractivism is intimately tied to the capitalist order and serves to preserve the capitalist political economic system writ large. Yet on another level, humanity and other life forms ultimately cannot co-exist with capitalism. Contesting dominant ideologies, and

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showing the impossibility of ecological survival under capitalism, represents a crucial albeit challenging task.

While this questioning is underway, organizing and mobilizing must continue. Our analysis seeks to contribute ideas and guidance around grassroots action, which also involves addressing historical injustice and redressing past harms. This does NOT mean allowing contemporary governments that are successor states to colonised peoples to continue to extract with impunity. Indeed, one key avenue to ending reliance on a model of extractive growth is for former/current colonial powers to make amends for the past and ongoing harms caused by their extractive practices. In the absence of full-fledged reparations, many former colonies, such as Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico, are themselves pursuing extraction as a means to counter the hegemony of the EuroAmerican/Australian global “north.” These approaches could become moot if the damaging impoverishment and degradation caused by colonial extraction were addressed through bona fide restoration and reparation.

Another challenge relates to the tension between action at the level of global political economy and everyday local or place-based resistance. Without losing sight of the need for broad structural change, we echo countless social movements and feminist scholars in asserting the importance of everyday, ‘non-heroic’ actions. Taking small but concrete steps towards the transformative vision is a crucial starting point. At the 2021 People’s Health Hearing at COP26, Ken Henshaw of We the People, an NGO based in the Niger Delta that aims to promote human rights, transparency, and accountability in the energy sector in Nigeria, reminded the audience that solutions to climate change are located in frontline communities and grassroots movements (see Figure 2). Mobilization, initially at a local level, ideally portends change. We agree, and believe that resistance to mining is “an unambiguous path out of exploitation towards social

Figure 2: Source: Carlotta Cataldi, https://peopleshealthhearing.org/

But unambiguous does not mean straightforward, short-term, or without setbacks. Local struggles against mining are met far too often with violence and other forms of retaliation against resisters, state/bureaucratic and corporate recalcitrance and impunity, and cynical ploys that divide communities.

Notwithstanding such tragedies and difficulties, the pursuit of localized post-extractive imaginings may offer both a future to aim for and a means of broader transformation. Anishinaabe scholar Sheryl Lightfoot (2016) recognizes that the global Indigenous rights movement takes place within the existing international order, but points out that as Indigenous communities envision and implement alternative ways of relating to and existing with nature and approaching collective care, the external actors and structures that they are connected to will have to undergo an accompanying transformation. Such principles apply to localized anti-extractive struggles, though undoubtedly pushing the larger societal culture to transform is difficult and dangerous: visionaries and defenders of local post-extractive imaginings, many of them Indigenous, face extraordinary threats. Maintaining a focus on transforming the global political economic structures driving extractivism while helping to nurture everyday place-based lifeways, and responding to urgent appeals in the face of threats, are pressing needs to which allies situated in health professions, higher education, civil society and activist groups must urgently apply ourselves.

To this end, a health justice lens allows us to imagine a world guided by the health and well-being of all people (and their environments) rather than by the demands of a capitalist economy, in turn revealing the possibility of dismantling the extractive order. Such a lens can motivate actions such as resistance movements, raising consciousness, drawing people into a larger anti-capitalist struggle, and demonstrating that day-to-day activism can make major strides towards a transformative vision. Approaches such as Sumak Kawsay and Land Back show that subjective wellbeing is a deliberate practice and can only be achieved as part of the collective wellbeing of humans, other beings, and the Earth itself. These worldviews, and dozens more, show that changing modes of living (that is, the conditions and occupations of given social strata, beyond individual ‘lifestyle’) is the only way to avoid collapse. To this end, proposals to build other types of health systems that are in touch with the defense of territories and ancestral modes of living underway go well beyond reducing the carbon emissions of dominant societies and national health systems therein.

The common thread among these approaches is about honoring the connection among all forms of life, appreciating limits, and prioritizing collective care. Thus, a post-extractive world entails relocating, re-anchoring, and returning authority to traditional stewards of territories, not within existing state structures but, as per Sumak Kawsay and Land Back, by moving beyond them. This means the restoration and/or (co)creation of governance models led by and grounded in the worldviews and knowledge systems of the Indigenous and traditional stewards of a particular place. A post-extractive world also means redefining political relationships between

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124 People’s Health Movement, “The People’s Health Hearing: Health Justice Means Climate Justice.”
societies: forming and maintaining relationships that are based in respect for Indigenous self-determination, reciprocity, consensus-based decision making, and non-coercive dialogue.\textsuperscript{126}

In \textit{Braiding Sweetgrass}, Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potowatomi biologist) critiques not only industrial solutions to repair wastelands but also “nature-based solutions” posed as engineering remedies. She argues that “the ecosystem is not a machine, but a community of sovereign beings, subjects rather than objects” and proposes to let those sovereign beings teach us how to repair the earth with compassion and care. Strikingly, her insights draw from having witnessed firsthand the physical violence wrought by Ecuadorian Amazon oil exploitation, as championed by the Correa government in the name of social redistribution. When Wall Kimmerer’s plane was diverted to an airstrip in the middle of the region’s “unbroken rainforest,” she had a bird’s-eye view of the “raw gashes of red soil marking the paths of pipelines” leading a "river shining like a blue satin ribbon… [to be] abruptly turned black.”\textsuperscript{127} She characterized these marks of extraction as “windigo footprints,” invoking the flesh-eating monster that, according to Ojibwe and other traditions, murdered and ate Indigenous people: the windigo is/was colonization and capitalism.

Undoubtedly, the political forces and technological worldview that devastated the river could and should not be its healer. Our first step, then, is to learn to question our centuries of indoctrination into human-centered consciousness, to learn how to enter into relationship with our fellow beings in our ecosystems, as if they were subjects rather than objects to be exploited and extracted. This approach can avert catastrophe, by planting a seed now that three or more generations from now can flower. As Wall Kimmerer explains, this lens is not a progression towards a technological future but mostly, a remembrance of what our ancestors already knew through generation upon generation of learning.

As this prayer of the midwives of the Union of Peasant Kichwa Organizations of Kotacachi (Ecuador) expresses:

\begin{quote}
Padre Fuego, ni más ni menos no somos, porque nosotros mismo somos fuego  
Pachamama, ni más ni menos no somos, porque nosotros mismo somos tierra  
Yakumamita, ni más ni menos no somos, porque nosotros mismo somos agua  
Wayrataitiku ni más ni menos no somos porque nosotros mismo somos aire
\end{quote}

(rezo de las mamas parteras del Consejo de Salud Ancestral de la Unión de Organizaciones campesinas Kichwas de Kotacachi).

\begin{quote}
Father Fire, we are neither more nor less, because we ourselves are fire  
Mother Earth, we are neither more nor less, because we ourselves are earth  
Mother Water, we are neither more nor less, because we ourselves are water  
Father Wind, we are neither more nor less, because we ourselves are wind
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Struggles against Repression in the Fight for People’s Health}, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj7FK6litZ8&t=10s.  