

Editorial Introduction

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Human Body Frontiers

Mindi Schneider

My back hurts.

When I was 19, spinal fusion surgery effectively turned my lower back into an immobile, very stubborn rock. So, every day, for the past few decades, my back hurts. And every day, for the past few decades, I sit in front of this computer, reading, typing, mousing, and trying to ignore that obnoxious little rock as he screams—pleads, really—for me to get out of this chair, right now, please, I can't go on like this, MOVE IT, LADY!!!

I have a sneaking suspicion that my body doesn't like to work.

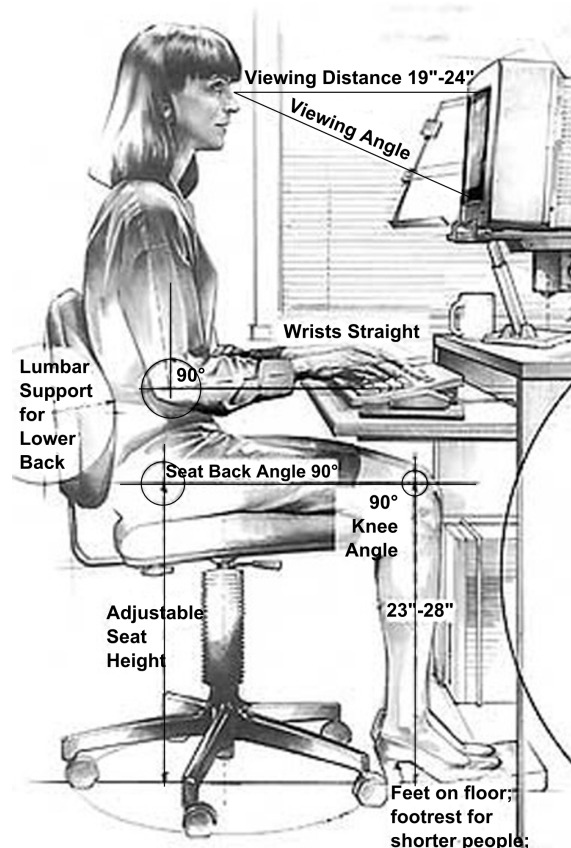
Maybe you can relate, with or without the spinal surgery bit. Scholarship, after all, requires spending years sitting at desks and screens after spending months hunched over in archives or riding bumpy buses through fieldwork. For many of us, it involves weeks of feeling anxious about ever-expanding to-do lists, upcoming and passed deadlines, looming grant proposals, that weird thing you said to a colleague last year, or the fact that you've only written one crappy paragraph after typing for 3 hours.

Working can really hurt.

And this is privileged work. For those of us with the luxury of being able-bodied and spending a good deal of our lives working on ideas while perched at desks, we tend to excel at engaging our favorite cranial organ, often to the

detriment of other parts of our bodies. Our backs hurt, our shoulders ache, our necks are cricked, our digestion might be off...but boy, oh boy, did we just pen another brilliant peer review for _____ (insert for-profit publisher name here)!

[Stretch break.]



CUERPO-TERRITORIO

AGRONEGOCIOS

La explotación del cultivo de soja y de otros transgénicos tiene un fuerte impacto socioambiental, y está contaminando la tierra, el aire y el agua debido al uso indiscriminado de plaguicidas, herbicidas e insecticidas. La concentración de tierras genera el desplazamiento de comunidades, afectando la soberanía alimentaria de estas a través de pérdidas en la variedad de cultivos y la biodiversidad de la región.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: PAMPA SOJERA, ARGENTINA

FEEDLOTS

Son lotes para la producción de carne mediante un sistema de cría y engorde intensivo en el cual los animales están encerrados en un espacio reducido, produciendo gases muy irritativos y olores repugnantes. Los desechos contaminan suelos y aguas y su presencia genera la pérdida de ricas ecologías de animales silvestres.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: SALADILLO, ARGENTINA

INCENDIOS

Las quemas son producidas para la recuperación de estas tierras para la producción agrícola y ganadera, produciendo un ruido que afecta contra los ruidos de vida de los bosques, y afecta el desarrollo y sustento de la flora y fauna local. Las quemas y la respiración activa dificultan el control de los incendios, y su expansión conlleva pérdida de biodiversidad y cambios en el cambio climático.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: BAJO PAMANA, ARGENTINA

MEGAMINERÍA

La minería a cielo abierto es una industria de fuerte impacto ambiental que se basa en la explotación de recursos no renovables encontrados debajo de la corteza terrestre de la tierra. Para extraer e librar los minerales mediante procesos químicos y explosivos que requieren los recursos naturales para la formación geológica y genera un proceso que incluye actividades muy contaminantes, el mineral de oro y plata es separado de la roca.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: LA ALUMBRERA, ARGENTINA

FORESTALES

Las plantaciones de monocultivos de pino y eucalipto se multiplican por la instalación de plantas de celulosa, consolidando un modelo forestal que favorece el desmoronamiento de bosques nativos, la explotación de pequeños productores de sus chacras y la pérdida de biodiversidad. La industria pesquera afecta esta industria gracias a la producción de papel, degradando el uso de la tierra, contaminando recursos hídricos y el aire, y afectando al paisaje.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: MISIONES, ARGENTINA

FRACKING

La extracción de hidrocarburos no convencionales se realiza a través de un procedimiento de perforación horizontal y fractura hidráulica, mediante la inyección de toneladas de agua con una fuerte presión y el agregado de arena y químicos altamente contaminantes. Provoca la contaminación de suelos con desechos y aguas saladas, el drenaje de los recursos acuíferos, en zonas con características desérticas y de emergencia hídrica.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: PUEL MAPU, ARGENTINA

SALMONERAS

La separación de la cría intensiva de salmones está causando un desastre ecológico por los residuos químicos que utiliza. Al crecimiento de los desechos contaminantes, compuestos por antibióticos, colorantes químicos, fosfatos orgánicos y metales pesados, se suma la muerte masiva de aves, varias especies de moluscos e incluso de otros mamíferos que consumen los peces muertos amparados al mar.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: MAR DE CHILE, CHILE

HIDROELÉCTRICAS

Se utilizan para satisfacer las demandas energéticas de proyectos agrícolas, mineros y petroleros. Trazan grandes territorios, alteran la pérdida de bosques, tierras fértiles y zonas de alto valor histórico-cultural y destruyen el clima con más humedad, vientos y lluvias. La explotación de los cultivos de coca y la descomposición de la materia orgánica en los embalses pueden promover la generación de gases de efecto invernadero, y afecta la biodiversidad local en ecosistemas ribereños.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: WSULO MAPU, CHILE

HIDROCARBUROS

Provocan consecuencias en todas sus fases de desarrollo: durante la explotación se produce deforestación, con las explotaciones se afectan los ciclos de vida de la fauna, y el uso de grandes plantas con químicos, contaminan el agua superficial, contaminan las aguas subterráneas. Los suelos reciben los derrames y desechos de la industria y la presencia de las pademinas produce un impacto físico de importancia, alterando el comportamiento de la vida silvestre.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: AMAZONIA ECUATORIANA

VIOLENCIA ARMADA

Los sucesos del conflicto tienen manifestaciones similares a las de una epidemia, y constituye un problema de salud pública en términos de mortalidad, morbilidad y deterioro de las condiciones de vida. La explotación de los cultivos de coca y la minería ilegal provocan daños ambientales, promueven la tala indiscriminada, contaminan ríos y tierras por el herbicida tóxico que se utiliza para destruir los cultivos de coca, y afecta la producción de alimentos.

TERRITORIO RELEVADO: CHICO-DARÉN, COLOMBIA

La explotación de los bienes comunes se asienta en una concepción utilitarista que concibe a la naturaleza como una fuente proveedora de materias primas, fomentando el saqueo, la privatización y contaminación de tierras comunales y recursos hídricos. El desarrollo de la industria extractiva afecta de manera directa o colateral a la salud y a las actividades cotidianas, degradando la calidad de vida de las comunidades. Las violencias históricas a las que han sido sometidos los pueblos colonizados de América Latina han golpeado tanto a los territorios ancestrales como al primer territorio, el cuerpo. Sobre él se imprimen las consecuencias generadas por el avance de la frontera extractiva, mostrando las dolencias, enfermedades y limitaciones que su expansión provoca.



REFERENCIAS TERRITORIALES

- Modelo de agropecuación de monocultivos de soja
- Cría intensiva de salmones
- Deforestación de bosques naturales
- Fumigaciones intensivas con herbicidas y plaguicidas
- Extracción convencional de hidrocarburos
- Vectores epidémicos desplazados de su hábitat natural
- Feedlots, centros de cría intensiva de animales
- Fracturación hidráulica para extracción de hidrocarburos (fracking)
- Desaparición de la biodiversidad
- Incendios provocados por explotación de fronteras de agropecuación
- Terremotos producidos por el fracking
- Contaminación del aire
- Minería a cielo abierto (oro, plata, tierras raras, etc.)
- Hidroeléctricas (energía para proyectos extractivos)
- Contaminación de ríos, lagos y mares
- Metales pesados (plomo, mercurio, cadmio, arsénico, cromo, etc.)
- Mitigación, parametrización, grupos armados
- Derrames de sustancias tóxicas
- Forestación intensiva para la fabricación de pulpa de papel
- Aserrados de tierras socio-ambientales
- Acuíferos y napas contaminadas
- Industria celulosa y papelera
- Desplazamientos forzados de personas
- Desertificación

Este desplegable fue elaborado para uso informativo y educativo. Surge del intercambio de conocimientos con docentes y participantes del curso "Introducción al estudio de los procesos de salud-enfermedad de extractivistas", organizado por el Instituto de Salud Socioambiental con el apoyo de la Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo. Diseño y edición: convocadas. Septiembre a noviembre de 2020, durante la pandemia del coronavirus.

This issue of *Commodity Frontiers* is about our collective backs and what human bodies can tell us about commodity frontiers. It's about the regimented bodies that sustain capitalism, and the (same) unruly bodies that challenge its smooth development. The issue is about labor, sex, blood, reproduction, racialization, decarceration, community, metabolism, and memory. It's about what bodies do, how they are unevenly incorporated into capitalist economies, and how they resist or contest incorporation.

We start from a simple premise: disciplined human bodies sustain capitalism.

They do so through labor and social reproduction, in vastly uneven ways, across intersectional social categories, histories, and geographies. As sites and processes of the incorporation (and creation) of “resources” into the expanding capitalist world economy, commodity frontiers are also sites and processes of incorporating human bodies. Today and in the past, the extraction, production, and circulation of goods and services require human bodies that work, think, and remember.

But human bodies do much more, and they need much more. Bodies require rest. They need care. And throughout the day—every day—they have to metabolize the foods, experiences, and feelings that are “input” to them. Human bodies continually act, react, process, and change. Each body is unique from the beginning, and in the course of life, they all grow, morph, age, slow down, become ill, become injured, regenerate. Bodies, in short, are unruly biological (and emotional) systems.

So what, really, can human bodies tell us about commodity frontiers?

The image on the preceding page provides one powerful link and example. Titled, “Body-Territory: 10 Socio-Environmental Problems in Argentina and South America and Their Serious Consequences on Health,” the image is from the Institute for Socio-Ecological Health in Rosario, Argentina. Jonas Adriaensens of

Ghent University shared the image with *Commodity Frontiers*. He describes it as follows:

The idea of body as a territory has been heavily studied in political sciences, sociology, and cultural studies, with authors like Foucault and Agamben developing notions like biopolitics to detail how power operates on bodies in society, and Haraway conceiving of the body as a contested territory. In this image, developed by the Institute for Socio-Ecological Health in Rosario, Argentina, a connection is made between human health and extractivist activities.

The central point here is that extractivist activities in South America manifest themselves not only in destroyed ecosystems and landscapes, but also on the human bodies of those living close to them. The body becomes itself an extracted territory and extractivism is employed to the detriment of human health. Health thus becomes inseparably connected to its political, socio-economic, and ecological context and we do not speak of body and territory, but of body-territory (or *cuerpo-territorio* in Spanish).

Cuerpo-territorio situates human bodies in dialectic relation with non-human environments and socio-political-economic forces. Viewed through a commodity frontiers lens, we can say that the human body is 1) an inseparable aspect of frontier expansion, especially as abstracted labor, 2) itself a site of incorporation, and 3) a site of contestation, both individually and collectively (and consciously and unconsciously), refusing seamless incorporation.

Articles in this issue take up these three points and the relations between them. The first two articles situate human bodies as labor. Speaking directly to capitalist transformations of the global countryside, Juri Auderset's piece orients laboring bodies in the rural sphere. He looks at how scientific management and work rationalization in the 19th and 20th centuries operated to incorporate agricultural labor into expanding frontiers. The image on the cover of

this issue comes from Auderset's piece. It depicts experiments conducted on agricultural workers in 1929 Budapest with the goal of determining how much labor could be extracted in the shortest humanly possible timeframe.

Eglė Česnulytė's article introduces the feminist lens that orients much work on human bodies as units of analysis in general, and on the laboring body in particular. Her piece argues that sex work is social reproductive work, showing the importance of this form of (female) labor to the creation and maintenance of (male) labor forces in Kenya. While sex work is largely unrecognized, undervalued, and understudied, it is an important site that both enables and contests capitalist patriarchy: while women are enrolled in its expansion, they can also independently accumulate capital to ideally reinvest in themselves and their families.

Sigrid Vertommen's contribution continues with questions of gendered bodies and capitalism. Rather than centering labor, she offers a decolonial materialist feminist perspective on frontiers that centers "the flesh" as extracted, mined, and commercialized *territory*. Looking at the Republic of Georgia as a surrogacy hub at Israel's "fertility frontier," she theorizes the incorporation of *laboring* bodies and relationships at the crossroads of biocapitalism and settler colonialism.

Fany Lobos Castro's view of bodies existing in "living hybrid" with territory and water shares much with (Marxist) feminist perspectives. But Lobos Castro's approach builds directly on ancestral wisdom and lived experience. An activist-scholar based in the rural territories of Maule Sur, Chile, Lobos Castro discussed her views on bodies and commodity frontiers with *CF* editor, Katie Sandwell. To resist commodification of any one of the three elements in the "living hybrid" triad, she describes (and urges the value of) collaborative ways of living that refuse atomization. Necessities of community, women, and collective care are strong in her piece.

Decarceration activist, Marlon Peterson, shares a similar focus on resistance in and through

community. In his conversation with *CF* editor, Stha Yeni, Peterson discusses his work as a writer, criminal system legal expert, public speaker, and mentor in communities on the prison pipeline in the United States. A formerly incarcerated person himself, he practices abolition through introspection and personal interrogation, as well as through community learning and engagement, and solidarity with international movements. Yeni and Peterson's article not only offers deep insights into abolition and decarceration; it is also a master class for practicing humility in fieldwork that students of ethnography should read and heed.

Starting with Ulbe Bosma's piece, the final three articles switch gears to look at human bodies—and parts of them—as themselves, commodity frontiers. From his new book, *The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years* (2023, Harvard), Bosma argues that through sugar, capital has hijacked human metabolism, reconstituting it as a frontier for accumulation. We see how sugar "cravings" are historically constructed to the point that they seem "natural" and inevitable. Meanwhile, sugar-related public health crises reflect the (individual and collective) body's rejection of sucrose colonization.

While radicalization and the dramatically uneven ways that racialized bodies are seen, valued, and treated in capitalist-colonial-patriarchal systems figure in other articles in this issue, Veronica Gomez-Temesio's piece takes it on more directly. Based on fieldwork in the Wonkifong Ebola quarantine unit in Guinea in 2015, Gomez-Temesio illuminates the exploitation of Black bodies as "guinea pigs" and sources of value for Western/Northern medical research industries. Her article follows the commodification of blood samples taken from people in Guinea in the wake of the 2013 Ebola epidemic, and the subsequent harm and manipulation that blood donors have endured.

Finally, the conversation between neuroscientist, André Fenton and *CF* editor, Maarten Vanden Eynde, considers memory as a possibly emerging frontier. Their discussion ranges from what, actually, memory is and

where it resides, to if and how AI (artificial intelligence) can duplicate it. Fenton helps us see bodies (and memory) as dynamic systems, full of complex and only partially understood relationships, comprised of individual and impermanent pieces that constitute networked and enduring wholes. To this reader, the parallels between what neuroscientists study inside of our skin, and what historians and social scientists study outside of it are exciting. The conversation also offers some clues for how we might connect these inner and outer realms.

On a final note, this issue of *Commodity Frontiers* is dedicated to the indomitable Tina Turner (November 26, 1939 – May 24, 2023). She left her earthy body just as the Issue was going to press. May her fierce, soulful, redemptive, embodied life be an inspiration to us all.

[Don't forget to stretch.]



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