

NEW DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Exploring the everyday
practices of global change

A summary of research conducted by
Dr. Roberta Hawkins and collaborators



A summary of New Development Responsibilities

The research conducted as part of Dr. Roberta Hawkins' SSHRC Insight Grant, titled "**New Development Responsibilities**," examined the material and discursive implications of global development responsibilities that take shape through individual actions in the Global North.

These global development responsibilities included issues related to **humanitarianism**, **environmentalism**, and **global citizenship**. The everyday practices examined in this research included: cause related marketing, ethical consumption, zero waste lifestyles, reality television focused on resource extraction, sustainable fashion choices, volunteer tourism, climate strikes, and fundraising bracelets, among others.

Through a feminist, anti-colonial lens, this research explored the intersection of global power dynamics, with everyday practices, and subject formation. Much of this research also considered the ways in which 'caring at a distance' was mediated through digital networks such as **apps** and **social media platforms like Twitter/X, Facebook, and Instagram**.

Dr. Hawkins conducted this research in collaboration with colleagues and ten graduate students. It has led to 9 Master's theses or projects, 1 PhD dissertation, and 10 published peer-reviewed articles. This report summarizes key findings from each of these contributions, highlighting themes that bring this work together.

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1. COMMODIFYING DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPASSION



Why are humanitarian sentiments profitable and what does this mean for global development?

Richey, L. A., Hawkins, R., & Goodman, M.K. (2021). World Development, 145, 1-4.

In this conclusion to the special issue, “The Black Box of the For-profit and Non-profit Partnership,” the authors argue that **there is profit in the commodification of humanitarian sentiments**, and that this contributes to power inequalities across the material and the representational outcomes of partnerships between for-profits in the Global North and non-profits in the Global South. The authors reflect on the broader articles included in this special issue, arguing that this work adds nuance to the ‘common sense’ belief that development outcomes cannot be met *without* the involvement of for-profit actors. Contributors to the special issue document the materiality behind this discursive framing of development as well as the political economy behind the ‘bling’ of such partnerships. They provide examples from multi-sited fieldwork, team collaborations, event ethnography, as well as discursive and value chain analysis. Together, these studies move beyond typical critiques of development as an idea and towards an examination of the actors and practices of development interventions, including the potential/actual outcomes for beneficiaries. This commentary highlights two prominent themes throughout the special issue.

Theme 1: Increasingly, in global development partnerships, doing well and doing good are framed as one and the same. Through the blending of for-profit, non-profit, state, and non-state development actors, the humanitarian sentiments of care, compassion and responsibility are framed as inherently synonymous with capitalistic and corporate profit.

Theme 2: In these partnerships, accountability becomes conflated with marketability. Such partnerships radically alter accountability in terms of who must be accountable to whom and which things must be accounted for. There is a strong pull towards ‘awareness raising’ as an outcome of for-profit non-profit partnerships; however there remains little evidence that increased likes, views, shares, followers etc. in the realms of social media lead to material changes.

Development Studies researchers need to be attuned to the everyday practices of power that are inherent in non-profit/for-profit partnerships between the Global North and Global South. Attending to new actors, alliances, networks and power dynamics in these global partnerships will be critical in work moving forward.



The responsabilization of “development consumers” through cause-related marketing campaigns

Kipp, A., & Hawkins, R. (2019). Consumption Markets & Culture, 22(1), 1-16.

Cause-related marketing (CRM), campaigns that combine consumption in the Global North with international development causes in the Global South, is an increasingly popular phenomenon. This research explores the role of CRM in consumer culture, considering how consumers are made responsible for international development issues through this practice.

Study design: To better understand the responsabilization of the development consumer through CRM, this study involved creating and analysing two distinct databases of CRM initiatives (2009/2010 and 2012). The databases were compared, and changes over the time periods identified. Noticing a trend towards social enterprises using CRM in the 2012 database, an in-depth analysis of these campaigns was conducted, exploring their structures and discourse. Authors looked closely at the founding stories of these social enterprises and examined the words, narratives and story-arcs used by the founders to describe their personal experiences and motivations behind starting their social enterprises. Finally, 8 one-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with NGO (n = 2) and social enterprise (n = 6) representatives.

This research reveals that the marketing strategies of social enterprises and the design of CRM campaigns produce individuals as responsible “**development consumers.**” This occurs through various processes, including:

- i Personalizing the cause for the consumers
- ii Using founders’ stories to authorize consumer action
- iii Producing a market capable of supporting a responsible “development consumer”

Ultimately, this article argues that the responsabilization of individuals into “development consumers” is inherently problematic because of how these processes 1) simplify development issues, 2) frame consumers as the solution to development, and 3) maintain markets that reinforce the unequal power dynamic between “development consumers” and the intended beneficiaries in the Global South. **In an age of new development responsibilities, individuals in the Global North are increasingly likely to be positioned as responsible for “solving” development issues through their everyday practices of consumption.**



Shifting conceptualizations of ethical consumption: Cause-related marketing in India & the USA

Hawkins, R. (2015). *Geoforum*, 67, 172-182.

This research explores **cause-related marketing (CRM)**, a type of ethical consumption, and positions it as a set of diverse practices that must be understood as situated in particular, global contexts. It examines CRM in two countries with distinct cultural, social, and economic settings: India and the United States. Given the recent growth of CRM in emerging economies like India, the research sought to understand how a shift in place necessitates a shift in the way researchers conceptualize this practice.

Study design: Using a comparative approach, this research examined four CRM campaigns in India and the United States.

In the United States, CRM is used as a tool to engage socially conscious consumers who care about global issues like climate change, human rights and poverty. It is positioned as an individual action, and makes these issues an individual responsibility. In India, CRM is a relatively new concept, where greater emphasis is placed on social values, community well-being and corporate social responsibility.

An analytical framework: Further research is needed to better understand CRM in this context. Building on these findings, this research puts forward an analytical framework for future research informed by economic, feminist, and postcolonial geographies. This framework creates space for ethical consumption campaigns in the Global North and Global South to be understood both as unique and in relation to one another, with the aim of avoiding centring research and processes from the Global North.

- i Move away from comparative studies and toward considering CRM as both situated in a particular place/context and interconnected globally
- ii Consider the mobility of policy and practice (not just things) and the embodied ways the CRM model is negotiated and practiced by particular actors
- iii Engage the concept of counter-topography to examine local/global processes
- iv Decentre the Global North through postcolonial approaches that examine the politics of knowledge production



Accessorizing development: Fundraising Bracelets for international Development as a New Development Responsibility

Hill-Tout, K., R. Hawkins. (2022). International Development, 3(5), 2046-2066.

Fundraising bracelets for international development (FBID) are being sold to consumers in the Global North wishing to support people and 'change lives' in the Global South. As a specific phenomenon of new development responsibilities, this research examines FBID as a practice related to gendered and racialized discourses in the field. Specifically, this research explores the roles of women enrolled in fundraising bracelet campaigns - both women in the Global North and Global South - and how they are represented. It also considers how these representations effect how consumption and international development are understood and practiced.

Study design: To conduct this research, a database of relevant FBID campaigns available to Canadians was created, recording details of each campaign. A critical discourse analysis of a subset of these campaigns was then conducted, specifically examining how the concept of 'livelihood creation' was framed in relation to fundraising bracelet campaigns.

Where are the women within the landscape of FBID? This research showed that women are everywhere in these campaigns —they are the artisans making the bracelets, the celebrities promoting them, the volunteers selling them, the consumers buying them and more.

How were women represented within FBID campaigns in relation to the bracelets, international development and one another?

Artisans from the Global South (always people of colour) were depicted as 'empowered' through their roles making these bracelets. White women were especially visible as consumers and campaign founders and were often depicted as White (women) saviours.

This research argues that FBID can be understood as a means through which international development is becoming 'accessorized', which depoliticizes the field. Further, by examining gendered and racialized discourses in these fundraising bracelet campaigns, this research highlights that there is an emerging White Woman Saviour Complex in the feminization of new development responsibilities.

2. DIGITIZING ETHICAL CONSUMPTION AND CARE



Breaking down barriers of culture and geography? Caring-at-a-distance through Web 2.0

Hawkins, R. (2018). *New Political Science*, 40(4), 727-743.

This research explores **Join My Village (JMV)**, a click-to-commit campaign that encourages internet users to ‘**care-at-a-distance**’ by connecting to beneficiaries of CARE projects in Malawi through digital engagement. JMV is reflective of several trends in the international development sector, including: (i) the increased prominence of new actors and alliances in promotion and intervention; (ii) the increased reliance on market-based mechanisms to promote and fund issues; (iii) the placing of development responsibilities on individual, non-experts and their everyday actions, and (iv) the use of digital technologies to promote development issues and “engage” audiences.

Study design: A systematic analysis of JMV digital media was used to explore what these themes looked like in practice. This included press releases, blog posts, Facebook posts, and related comments. Interviews with individuals who played significant roles in developing this digital media content were also conducted, to gain a better understanding of how and why they sought to extend care for distant ‘others’ in this digitally-mediated way.

JMV discourses engage various strategies to encourage care towards distant others, including:

- i expanding the category “us”
- ii focusing on material connections between the Global North/South
- iii encouraging relational responsibility

This included detailed storytelling; comparing similarities and differences between users and beneficiaries; and emphasizing the (urgent) need for users to click on content to trigger corporate donations. The findings raise questions about the ways digital media in the JMV campaign constitute caring-at-a-distance, specifically: whose voices/lives are the focus of the campaign; how does framing development issues as simultaneous complex and easily addressed by aid confuse the overall messaging; and, what are the ultimate goals of the JMV campaign?

While JMV offers possibilities for caring-at-a-distance, the contradictory messaging and the corporate aspects of JMV call for more critical attention to the relationship between self and the distant other that is constituted through click-to-commit campaigns.



Ethical consumption? There's an app for that: Digital technologies and everyday consumption practices

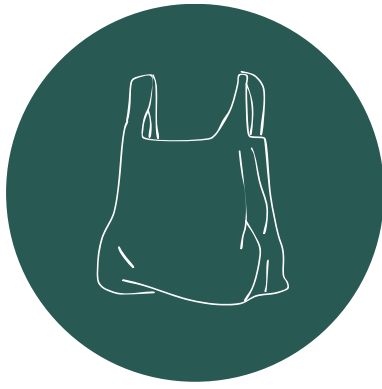
Hawkins, R., & Horst, N. (2020). *The Canadian Geographer*, 64(4), 590-601.

In a market saturated with products, messaging and certification schemes, ethical product consumption has become increasingly difficult. **Ethical consumption apps** boast a quick solution that intend to alleviate obstacles to shopping ethically by providing information to a consumer based on a quick scan of a product's barcode using the camera on their mobile phone. This research explores the everyday ways in which consumers engage with ethical consumption apps.

Study design: The researcher conducted an in-depth study of the **Boycott app** with 21 participants who identified as ethical consumers. Boycott is a free app targeted to ethical consumers, where users can sign-up for campaigns/issues that represent their ethical values (e.g. LGBTQ rights, GMO labelling). Participants agreed to use the Boycott app while doing their shopping over a two-week period, and to keep journal entries about their experiences. Focus groups were conducted at the beginning and end of these two weeks. The researchers also interviewed the app developer and conducted a content analysis of the app and a media analysis of app media coverage.

The authors found that the information the Boycott app provided was interpreted and engaged with by participants in complex ways. While the app did influence participants' consumption behaviour to boycott certain products, in many instances they purposefully did not use the app or ignored the app's recommendations. In other instances, the app influenced participants' shopping behaviours, including what stores they chose to shop at, as well as brands of products they purchased. Findings provided greater insight on everyday experiences of ethical consumption, specifically as mediated through digital apps. These findings call into question claims that ethical consumption apps can simplify information provision and decision making for consumers. Rather, using the Boycott app was labour-intensive and emotionally fraught for many.

This research on the Boycott app offers some insight into the ways in which the meaning of "ethical" is mediated through digital technologies. Findings suggest that the meaning of ethical is not static and changes through individuals' everyday use of ethical consumption apps.



Zero waste lifestyles on social media: Portrayals and practices

Beninger, C. (2022) Published master's thesis.
University of Guelph.

This research examines the role of aesthetics in the cultural politics of sustainability. To do so, it analyses Instagram accounts that promote zero waste lifestyles. **Zero waste** is a lifestyle that strives to avoid the creation of waste through conscious consumption, and the reuse of disposal goods. It has gained increasing popularity on social media in the last decade; however, the aesthetic of zero waste, and its role in the movement's popularization on social media, is still not widely understood.

Study design: To better understand zero waste, this study engaged with 6 North American zero waste Instagram content creators and their followers. Creators were chosen based on the popularity of their accounts (1,000+ followers), and their willingness to participate. Data collection and analysis involved a discourse analysis of each content creators' Instagram accounts, considering photos posted, associated text, symbolic meaning, and follower engagement. Following this discourse analysis, content creators were invited to take part in photo elicitation interviews.

Participants were asked to select several of their Instagram posts to guide the conversation. Additionally, followers of the interviewed content creators were invited to take an online survey to explore what meanings they had made from the Instagram content. In total 263 followers responded to the survey.

Social media content creators utilize a curated zero waste aesthetic, characterized by visually appealing practices, a minimalist aesthetic, neutral and natural-tone colours, as well as the inclusion of natural fibres, materials, and plants. While there was an aesthetic of minimalism and natural, beauty content creators were highly aware of pressures around perfectionism and exclusions in the industry and tried to counter this with their text and the themes of their posts.

This study reveals a nuanced connection between aesthetics and the zero waste lifestyles depicted by Instagram creators, as well as the influence on individuals engaging with sustainable lifestyles,



Digital fashion and sustainable fashion futures

Smikle, V. (2023). Published master's thesis.
University of Guelph.

The fashion industry is often criticized for its damaging global impact. While movements exist to challenge poor industry practices, consumers are vocal that organizational practices remain insufficient in meeting ethics and sustainability demands. Recently, there has been a turn in the fashion industry where **fashion practices and garments are produced and consumed digitally**. This thesis explores how narratives about technology are used to disseminate visions and actions toward sustainable fashion futures.

Study design: This research involved an environmental scan exploring how digital fashion is discussed online, examining grey literature and relevant content on TikTok. Next, an event ethnography was conducted of Digital Fashion Week in New York City, which included participant observation and semi-structured interviews with participants.

Through these methods, a common narrative emerged of conventional fashion practices as 'broken', and digital fashion as a possible solution. Despite this common narrative, findings revealed nuanced

perspectives on the potential of digital fashion. Some positioned it as a disruptor in the industry, while others highlighted concerns with how it is currently practiced. For instance, technology problems may impede its effectiveness and, in some cases, it may replicate existing challenges seen in conventional fashion (e.g. using resource intensive technology; creating new virtual spaces for exclusion based on class, gender, sexuality, and race). Although digital fashion has been described by many proponents as a sustainable and ethical solution to the problems in conventional fashion, this research reveals that this is not always the case (e.g. digital fashion still uses material resources and pollutes through technologies).

This thesis argues that narratives positioning fashion technology as futuristic function as a tool to appease consumers' desires for change and a means to mobilize activist efforts in fashion. It adds to futurism scholarship exploring the role of sustainable technology, articulating how these characterizations are employed in the fashion industry, and providing insights on how digital fashion producers can create effective sustainability development.



Non-Profit environmental organizations and social media

Fromknecht, B. (2018). Published master's thesis.
University of Guelph.

In the United States, non-profit environmental organizations have high social media adoption rates, as well as the ability to influence public opinion with regards to local and global ecosystems. This research examines how representatives of non-profit environmental organizations conceptualize, plan, use, and evaluate social media.

Study design: 34 key informant interviews were conducted with staff members of non-profit environmental organizations in the United States. The goal was to better understand the perspectives of the individuals doing the digital labour involved in maintaining organizations' social media accounts. Social media content from each organization was also collected over 12 weeks to inform the interview process.

According to participants' the primary influences on their social media practices included the organization's structure, availability of resources, perceptions of organizational voice and identity, contemporary social media trends, and social media audiences/other organizations.

While the goals and metrics for success varied widely between organizations, common themes included 1) awareness and 2) growth (e.g. growth of audience, improved partnerships, funding, etc.). These findings show that those doing the social media work of non-profit organizations understood and interacted with virtual space in complex ways which involved multiple layers of location, scale, and perceptions of community. For example, participants made connections between their social media use and offline material environments. Virtual spaces and networks can enable support in many ways, such as online donations or sharing a Facebook post. It's important to consider that each post is influenced by multiple factors, including organizational goals and priorities, resources, planned media campaigns, and relationships with communities, other organizations, and the private and public sector.

As the digital work that organizations perform online reflects and supports material places and ecosystems, the relationships between online space, offline places, and media needs careful attention.

3. EXPLORING THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



Gendered and racialized experiences and subjectivities in volunteer tourism

Kipp, A., Hawkins, R., Gray, N. J. (2021). Gender, Place and Culture, 28(1), 45-65.

Volunteer tourism is a feminized sector of international travel. Most volunteer tourists are young, white, middle-class women from the Global North, with a roughly four to one ratio of women to men participating. The drive to 'help' and the resulting encounters in volunteer tourism are embedded in power dynamics such as patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism. Through patriarchy and colonialism white women have been constructed as 'helpers' and 'caregivers' - and even 'white saviours' - in the sector. This paper uses a gender lens to explore how volunteer tourists' gendered and racialized subjectivities shape and are shaped by their experiences while volunteering in the Global South with development-focused projects.

Study design: To conduct this research, the authors analyzed first-person accounts of volunteer trips abroad. The first author conducted 30 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with former volunteer tourists who had a combined experience in 25 different countries around the world. Participants travelled with many different organizations and participated in a variety of activities.

Research findings highlighted:

- i the spaces, activities, and interactions of volunteer tourism are gendered and racialized and influenced by understandings and experiences of care and fear.
- ii experiencing these gendered and racialized geographies of care and fear while abroad can lead volunteers to recognize and reflect on their subjectivities in new ways
- iii these opportunities for self-reflection often result in reinforced stereotyping and privileging of certain bodies and subjectivities, specific-ally as they relate to Global North-South power dynamics

This research illustrates how volunteer tourism may separate rather than connect individuals from the Global North and GlobalSouth, preventing increased cross-cultural understanding. It argues that volunteer tourism should be reimaged and practiced to focus on solidarity and support rather than relationships centered on care and hindered by fear. More research is needed exploring the gendered and racialized experiences of individuals living in communities where volunteer tourism takes place.



A community economies approach to consignment clothing in Guelph, Ontario

Homer, E. (2017). Published master's thesis. University of Guelph.

This study investigates **consignment clothing sales, consumption and shop ownership** of shops in Guelph, Ontario, using a community economies framework (Gibson-Graham, 2006). The community economies literature encourages a reimagining of the economy as more than just capitalist, bringing into view alternative, non-capitalist economies.

Study design: Taking a feminist approach, a mix of consignment shop owners, sellers and consumers of consignment products were interviewed. Participants were asked to reflect on how they engaged with and experienced consignment shopping and selling, as well as their understandings of consignment as a form of community economy.

Participants described consignment as a local, affordable, good quality and environmentally friendly practice, reflecting key tenets of the communities economies literature. Their responses highlighted the spatiality of consignment, with many connecting it to the 'shop local' movement. Participants also spoke to the perceived economic value of consignment shopping, recirculating value locally through donating/purchasing clothing within the city.

They positioned consignment as a long-term investment, highlighting the quality and durability of consignment compared to fast-fashion products. Responses also emphasized consignment as a social practice, appreciating the familiarity of local shops and store owners. Many connected consignment in Guelph to the community and culture of the city. Finally, participants emphasized consignment as an ethical and environmentally friendly practice; for example, in opposition to consuming fast fashion.

Despite alignment with a community economies approach, findings revealed nuance in participants' experiences. Bringing this analysis together with a 'compound economies' model (Heley, Gardener & Watkin 2012), this research highlights important tensions around local/global distinctions, accessibility, privilege, consumer politics, and emotions, in consignment shopping/selling.



School Strike 4 Climate (Justice): Exploring the experiences of climate strike organisers in Canada

Wlasichuk, J. (2022). Australian Journal of Environmental Education, 38, 121-123.

In September 2019, **climate strikes in Canada broke records, becoming the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history** (Climate Strike Canada, 2019). This research investigates how climate justice is represented and communicated from Climate Strike Canada (CSC), as well as how strike leaders define and practice climate justice. It explores these leaders' perspectives, understandings and definitions of climate justice, bringing their ideas into conversation with literature from various fields, including climate justice, racial justice, Indigenous sovereignty, eco-emotions, youth and climate advocacy, and social media advocacy.

Study design: To explore how climate justice is represented, perceived, and practiced within the Canadian Climate Strike movement 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with climate strike organisers. It also included a content analysis of Climate Strike Canada's Instagram page posts between April 29, 2019 and February 14, 2021.

Findings identified four predominant themes in participants' definitions of climate justice, including:

- Indigenous sovereignty
- racial justice
- economic justice
- social justice.

Additionally, this research emphasized the following: the climate strikers are highly motivated by their emotions; they use social media as a tool to grow the movement in size and impact; the identities of the strikers impact their personal experiences; and the strikers' actions and goals are highly focused on future generations.

Meeting the call for research that explores climate justice in everyday actions and examines the impacts of the climate strikes, this research argues that the climate justice engaged in by the climate strikers is emotional, action-oriented, and grounded in place and time. It highlights the intersectionality of climate justice with racial, social, and economic justice for all people - across identities and geographies.



Conceptualizations of development: A Case Study of WE Schools

Hirvi, J. (2018). Unpublished master's project.
University of Guelph.

One of Canada's most prominent private development organizations is WE Charity. This organization aims to empower North American youth to become **"change-makers"** by giving them the tools to make a difference in the world. One avenue through which WE Charity works is the **WE Schools program**, where high school students are encouraged to participate in local and global fundraising campaigns. This research examines the structure, aim, and purpose of the WE Schools program with particular attention paid to the ways development 'problems' and 'solutions' are identified and promoted.

Study design: This study is based on an in-depth discourse analysis of the promotional materials found on WE Charity's website, including videos, images, webpages, and guidebooks.

This research revealed three main narratives used by WE Charity in their promotional materials for WE Schools: 1) making-a-difference, 2) skill-building, and 3) WE versus the individual.

WE Charity used these narratives to frame WE Schools as an initial point of contact for Canadian youth interested in development, furthering their claim that WE is transforming individual youth into global citizens and change-makers. Although these narratives may have been helpful in drawing students' attention to international development issues, they often oversimplified practices through which students could make a difference. By positioning students who joined WE Schools as change-makers, individuals in the Global North and WE as an organization were centred, where as individuals in the Global South were framed as lacking agency and power.

Rather than promoting a critical form of global citizenship - e.g. encouraging students to understand the root causes of global inequalities, form international solidarities, or recognize their own responsibility within global issues - WE Schools constructed a limited form of global citizenship, teaching students that through practices like bake sales and cause-related marketing they could 'save the world.'

4. FEMINIST DIGITAL NATURES



Feminist digital natures

Nelson, I. L., Hawkins, R., Govia, L. (2023).
Nature and Space, 6(3), 2096-2109.

Natures of varying scales and forms are sensed, monitored, represented, manipulated, and governed, through digital technologies, with uneven consequences. For example species identification technologies have been used to track various wildlife populations, mobile phone apps have promised to help us determine if our daily practices are 'clean' or 'toxic', and drones have been used in the name of 'reforesting the planet.' The recurring promise and attendant anxieties of "helping" bodies and natures emerges here through powerful relations with digital technologies. To make sense ideas, this commentary proposes a research agenda for the concept of **"feminist digital natures,"** an approach combining feminist epistemologies and practices with an understanding that "digital technologies mediate and co-produce many natures."

Study design: This conceptual framework, brings together three overlapping areas of scholarship that have potential for productive discussions, new questions, and empirical analysis: **1) feminist digital geographies, 2) digital natures, and 3) feminist political ecology.**

Using specific examples of digital technologies, the authors show what this approach can look like in practice. They illustrate that Feminist Digital Natures can be used to extend these three fields - for example, by exploring cases not normally under their umbrellas. Doing so can reveal interesting questions and starting points for critical analysis and action. Feminist digital natures is conceptualized as a generative field, with many possibilities for intersecting with other areas of study and activism such as critical disability studies, and/or decolonization and reconciliation efforts, among others. This approach can help researchers to consider power dynamics that aren't only about capitalism, to recognize perspectives at the individual scale as interconnected to the structural, and to view natures that are not positioned as opposite to urban places or limited to conservation and resource narratives.

Ultimately, the researchers contend that feminist geographers can and should think with digital relations, and in doing so, might benefit from new creative conversations across disperse areas of inquiry and action.



Where are rooted networks in digital political ecologies?

Hawkins, R., Nelson, I. L. (2022). *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, 4: 989387.

As natures are increasingly monitored, controlled, visualized, and mediated digitally, political ecology scholars have begun to more carefully consider the role of ‘the digital.’ This perspective piece starts from the belief that political-ecological relations are *already* digital and that feminist analyses help reveal their often-overlooked power relations. It highlights that what is often omitted from **digital political ecologies** research is key epistemological lessons from feminist political ecologies - specifically the concept of ‘**rooted networks.**’ This article provides an overview of lessons that can be learned from the concept of rooted networks, translating these lessons to writing strategies for researchers.

i. Ground narratives in place relations and natures: Rooted networks research in FPE brings abstract versions of network thinking and analysis back down to Earth through grounding these processes in territories, places and natures. Consider asking: *what is material about the processes and the technologies under investigation? Where do power dynamics touch down in physical locations?*

ii. Centre other voices and lived experiences:

One of the goals of FPE and rooted networks is to “conduct analyses that unearth multiply-situated knowledges within networks” ([Cantor et al., 2018](#): 959). One’s own research might ask, *who is designing and using the technology under study? What are lived experiences of the outcomes of these technologies?*

iii. Write in the researcher(s): As researchers we have a particular perspective on our work – even when that work is digital and seemingly abstract. Consider, *how do I encounter these technologies? How does it feel to use them/spend time away from them?*

iv. Open-up room for possibilities - Move away from the tendency to see digital research through a techno-dystopic lens or to interpret all power dynamics as hierarchical or deterministic. Ask, *how have I taken a techno-dystopic viewpoint? Why? What else is happening in the power relations I am describing?*

Following these suggested writing strategies whenever possible can make our writing on digital political ecologies more engaging, clear and accessible to readers.



Gender, nature and nation: Resource nationalism on primary sector reality TV

Clark, K., Hawkins, R., & Silver, J. J.
(2020). *Nature and Space*, 3(4), 1196-1214.

A number of media companies in the United States broadcast **reality TV series** that chronicle lives, conflicts and economic highs and lows in **the primary sector of the economy**. This paper examines primary sector reality TV series about fishing, logging and mining televised to audiences in the United States by broadcast networks Discovery and National Geographic (e.g. *Deadliest Catch*, *American Loggers*), to critically analyse how they intersect with themes of gender, nationalism, and environmental management.

Study design: Using discourse and visual analysis, we deconstruct prominent nature–society representations in a sample of 100 episodes systematically selected from 15 different series (approximately 75 hours of audio-visual data). In order to be included in the study the series must have been a reality show with a focus on commercial natural resource extraction, and premiered between March 2005 and April 2016. Analysis focused on the messages mediated by primary sector reality TV, and finding patterns within and across series in the way nature–society relations are (re)produced.

Primary sector reality TV series mediate gender, nature, and nation in many ways.

i. Gender: Most characters are white males in tense storylines, depicting (economically) successful men as strong, competitive, and brave in the face of a wild/unpredictable/dangerous nature.

ii. Nature: Sexualizing nature and resource extraction in pursuit of economic fortune draws out the visibility of hegemonic masculinity in contrast to women and femininity

iii. Nation: The series are full of American symbolism and national pride that positions American (assumed), heterosexual men as exclusively equipped to economically succeed in harsh natural elements.

These shows have important political and material implications that may restrict alternative interpretations of the relationship between nature/society and consumption/sustainability. They promote resource nationalism that reinforces glorification of the American dream and individual consumption.

New development responsibilities: Exploring the everyday practices of global change

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