

SEMINAR
BRISTOL, GEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION
COAL MINERS IN TAJIKISTAN



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Introduction to my ethnographic work

- Coal mining in Kante, Tajikistan
- A year in the village
- Ethnography: long term observation and involvement in a community
- Lived in the local village and taught in the local school

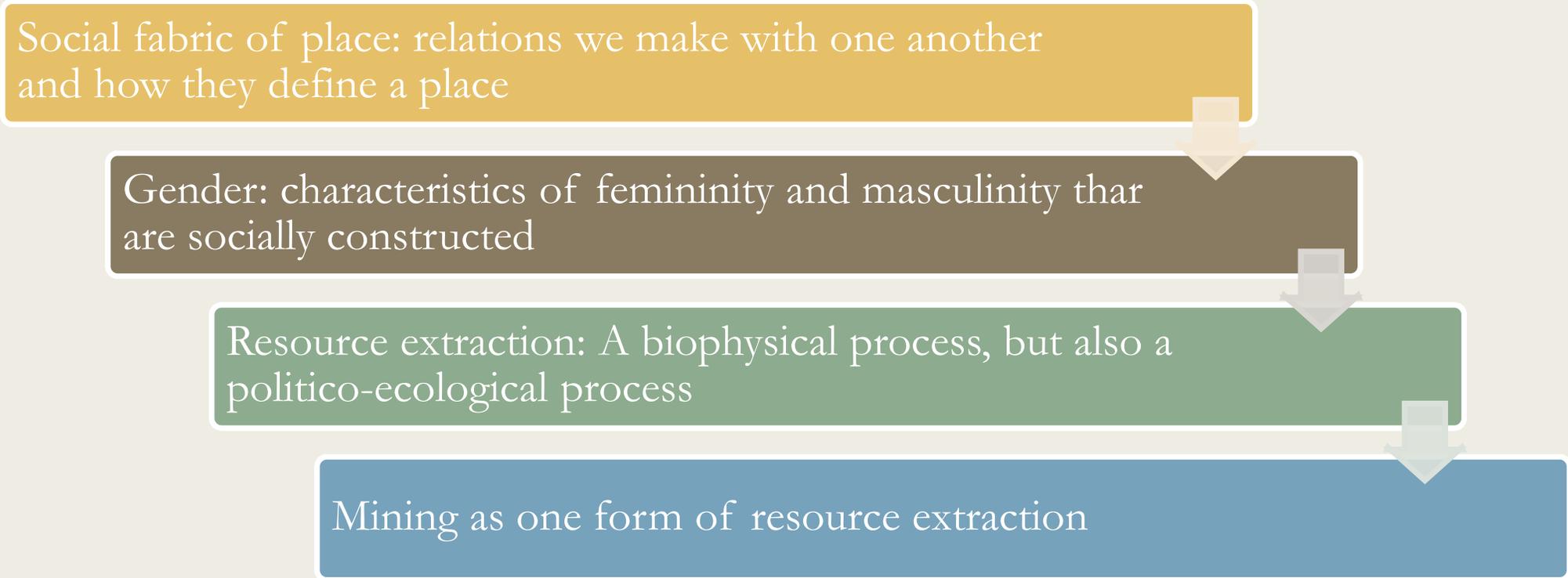


Agenda

- How has coal mining transformed an extractive landscape in Tajikistan since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991?
- We will particularly discuss the ways in which **resource extraction and the specific politico-ecological system it is embedded in changes the social fabric of places.**
- **Gendered approach to mining**
- We will do so by reflecting on my ethnographic work in the village of Kante in Tajikistan,
- And on two short films that I have co-directed drawing on my fieldwork: an animated ethnographic documentary (Nadirah: Coal woman) and a short video ethnographic documentary film (Komor: Journey through the Tajik underground).

Elements of definition

Social fabric of place: relations we make with one another and how they define a place



Gender: characteristics of femininity and masculinity that are socially constructed

Resource extraction: A biophysical process, but also a politico-ecological process

Mining as one form of resource extraction

1. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT





BACKGROUND – THE TAJIKISTANI EXTRACTIVE LANDSCAPE

Gender in Tajikistan

1. Soviet past: nature and legacy
1. Contemporary period: towards a retraditionalisation of Central Asian societies?
 - Gender and nation
 - Gender and Islam
 - **Gender and politico-ecological transformations**



Natural resource extraction in Tajikistan

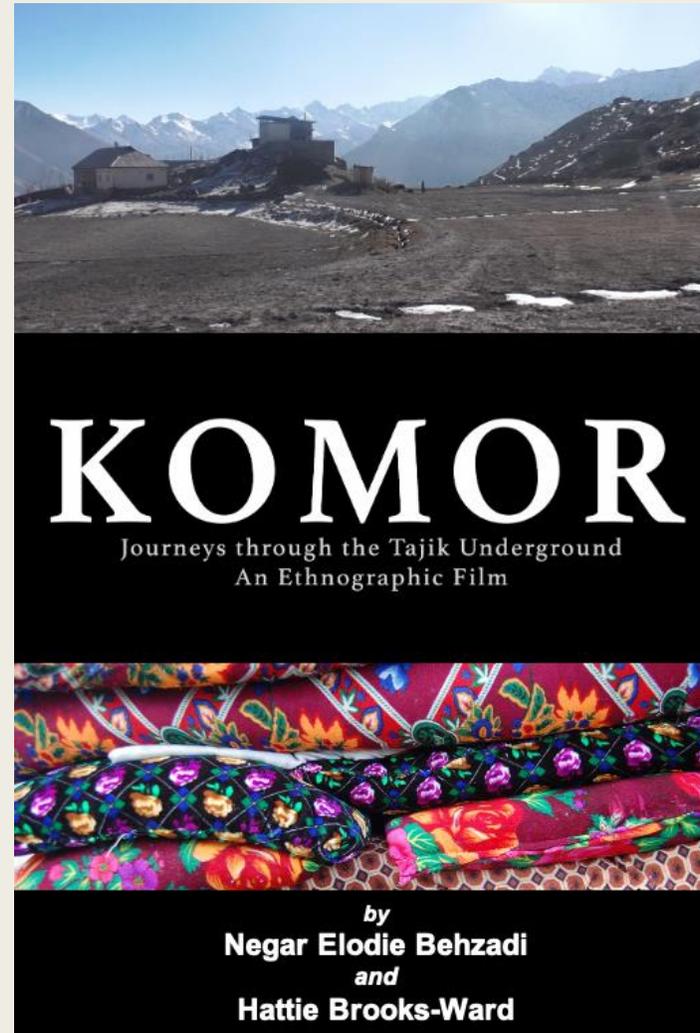
- Monopolies – former oligarchs
- Chinese investments
- Resource struggles and wars between different countries / Uzbekistan and Tajikistan
- The Rogun Dam
- Closure of taps that provide gas to Tajikistan
- Turn to coal
- Gold mining



2. THE TWO FILMS



Komor, the video-ethnographic film



Nadirah: Coal woman



Two questions to you

According to what
you have seen in the
two films,

How has mining
impacted the social
fabric of places in
the village of Kante?

And in particular
questions related to
gender?

3. HOW HAS MINING TRANSFORMED KANTE?



The Kantegui extractive landscape

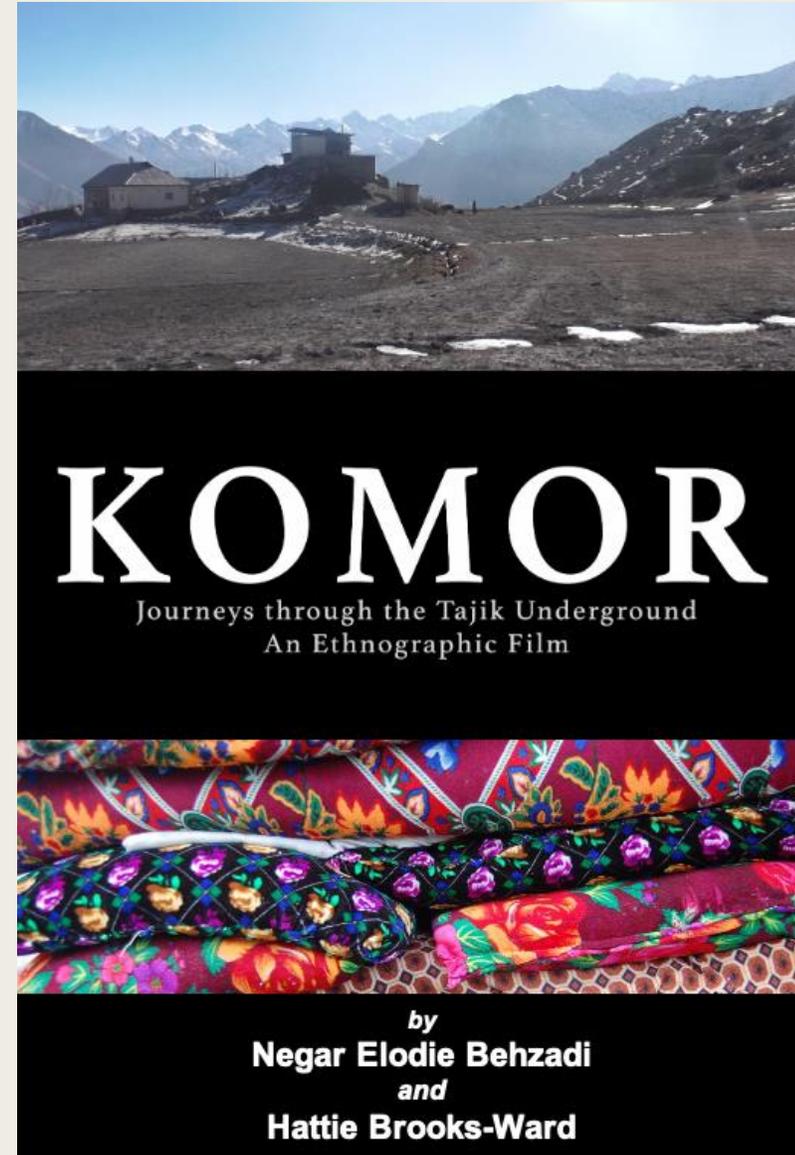
At a glance

- Kante's integration in the global economy
- 1991: Kantegui start digging coal for subsistence purposes in informal galleries
- 2000s: Emergence of a growing informal market
- 2012/3: Regional struggles/ turn to coal in the country
- 2013: Sino-Tajik mine open pit formal coal mining sets up in the village



A first form of exclusion

- Resource struggles between informal/artisanal miners and the Sino-Tajik mine
- Encroaching of formal mining on informal mining
- Exclusion from land and resources
- 'Displacements in place' (Nixon, 2011, p19)



Exhaustion of land and resources

- Extractive violence:
 - *Spectacular and visible: dispossession, dynamiting of mountain, crushed houses and donkeys*
 - *Slow: casualization of labour, anxiety 'coal is all we've got'*
- Subterranean wealth is a blessing and a curse: brings jobs but also rumours that the village will disappear 'eaten up by the Chinese'
- State's role: local government, TALCO owned by the 'president'



WOMEN MINER'S WORK

- Women's labour considered as 'ayb' / shameful
- 19 female miners who mine everyday
- Hidden/ sometimes at night
- Stigmatization/ exclusion from networks of reciprocity
- Assumptions about women's bodies, reproductive capacity, sexuality





Young female miners

Kelins – daughters in law

Monda – tired

Ganda – spoiled, bad, exhausted

Komorkesh – A miner

Kambaghal – The poorest of the poorest/the unfortunate



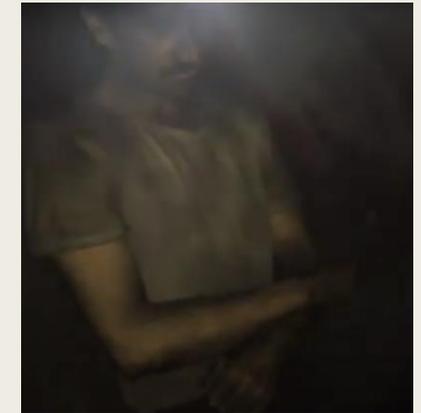
The people who were goint a nigh
y were taking their children with



CHILDREN MINERS

Diverse masculinities

- The migrant
- The sell out who works for the Chinese
- The strong masculine informal miner
- Divisions within the village around the performance of these different masculinities



Conclusion

Scales – relationship between the global, national, local, personal

Mining as having social effects / Social fabric of extractive zones

Looking at politico-ecological changes as looking at people's everyday lives

The gendered and aged nature of relationships and identities in the village

Use of visual methodologies to elucidate this