

Political Ecology of Technology

Cole Stratton
Indiana University
stratton@indiana.edu

All technological artifacts are made of material elements that originate in the natural world. All technological affordances depend on the unique qualities of specific materials from particular places. All of these materials must be extracted from the earth, transported across the planet, reconfigured into useful forms, and assembled into a technological artifact before that artifact is ever able to enter into the social relations of human societies. The history of technology is thus fundamentally ecological.

This panel seeks to explore the ecological aspects of the history of technology. It welcomes contributions that engage with the materiality of technology, supply chains, environmental impact, exploitation of labor, or any related topics. The goal of this panel is to link the use of technologies in human societies to their ecological requirements; to illustrate the ecological dynamics at work in the creation, life-cycle, and discard of technology; and to make explicit the fundamental role that natural resources and human bodies play in the history and evolution of technology.