

Madagascar. But isn't such a perspective necessary here too, perhaps even more so, if it is true that the residues of mining represent a planetary crisis?

This book, incredibly rich in profound analysis, is an invitation to complex thinking, and, as such, should be read and read again from different angles, with the certainty of discovering new insights each time.

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doi: [10.1017/S0001972024000457](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972024000457)

This book has been written in honest anger, with stunning vehemence and exquisite one-liners. In *Residual Governance*, Hecht demonstrates that, although formal apartheid may have ended and industrial deep-level gold mining along the Witwatersrand has been stuttering to an end since 1994, the social and environmental destruction wrought by mining within the context of racial capitalism in South Africa continues unabated. Indeed, if anything, the destruction has only worsened and is set to degrade further in the future. In five substantive chapters, Hecht illustrates the pernicious long-term effects of industrial mining and its implications for the planet as a whole. Hecht does not see South Africa in isolation; instead, she argues that South Africa should be seen as a portent for the rest of the world and its future.

Hecht's work is a call to action, one that is based on empirical data and solid political analysis. Drawing on Charles Mills, Hecht calls attention to the racial contract that underlies the technopolitical project that is South Africa in the present. Taking the waste that is generated by industrial mining in South Africa as a focal point, Hecht is able to: (1) explain and illustrate the mechanisms of systemic and epistemic racism; (2) make clear the infrastructural and environmental expressions of racial capitalism; and (3) describe the 'nature and stakes of political struggle in the Anthropocene' (p. 5). To demonstrate this, Hecht develops and deploys the concept of residual governance, which in essence entails governance that treats 'people and places as waste and wasteland' (p. 6).

The consummate opening of Chapter 1, 'You can see apartheid from space', with its innovative and intelligent use of Google Earth, makes it ideal for teaching. One can almost see the 'aha moment' of understanding emerge on the faces of a class of students as they come to realize the implications of political decisions that placed townships for Black South Africans downwind of the toxic mine dumps of the Witwatersrand. Toxic mine dumps are laden with radioactive material and caustic chemical compounds that are swept into the wind and blown across townships, inhabitants of which are 'eternally aware of the sand in the machine, they suffer the daily effects of the grind' (p. 23). For me, Chapter 2, 'The hollow Rand', was a true hammer blow. The chapter focuses on water rising in abandoned mineshafts, thereby becoming more acidic and contaminated with heavy metals, later 'decanting' into the water used for drinking and irrigation. What makes this all the more disconcerting is that it is set to get worse as mines cease operating. Added to which, 'corporate shuffling [has] enabled the largest companies to walk away from the messes they'd made' (p. 68). Chapter 3, 'The inside-out Rand', focuses on the truly staggering amount of dust

and sand generated by mining and the devastating effects that this has had on the lungs of workers and neighbouring populations. Hecht also describes attempts by authorities to curb mining dust. These efforts range from inviting botanists from Kew to propose plants capable of growing on mercury-contaminated soil to literally spraying mining dumps with shit (pp. 100–1). Some of these dumps have been re-mined, primarily for uranium, gold and other heavy metals. Or they have become the site for a drive-in cinema, remembered nostalgically by white patrons, oblivious of the carcinogenic consequences for Black South Africans forced to live downwind of them (pp. 116–24). Chapter 4, 'South Africa's Chernobyl?', is a micro-study of community life in such a contaminated landscape, while Chapter 5, 'Land mines', is a macro-study of the impact of mining waste on the Rand as a whole.

Hecht's work is symptomatic of our times, when the impact of incessant, rapacious capitalism on the world we inhabit continues to be dismissed or downplayed. As such, this work will appeal to, and substantiate the arguments of, concerned students and teachers, and will grate with and irritate those who choose to live in a fact-free world in which financial wealth appears to continue to buy absolution.

Hecht is searingly honest. Reading her work is to be pummelled by a heavyweight. It is difficult not to walk away despondent and despairing, the issues she describes are so enormous, the damage so extensive, the evil so pervasive. And yet, such work has to be written, and it has to be read if we are ever to right the wrongs of the past. For, as Hecht puts it: 'The only way to get traction on the complexities of residual governance is intensive empirical engagement' (p. 32). It is difficult to do full justice to the author's writing. Undoubtedly there will be those who will seek to fudge and diminish her findings by drawing attention to the perceived lack of impartiality in her approach, but, in keeping with Hecht, the struggle continues: 'No retreat. No surrender' (p. 207).

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doi: [10.1017/S0001972024000469](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972024000469)

Response by the author

Melusi Nkomo, Lorenzo D'Angelo and Jan-Bart Gewald have reviewed my work with depth and generosity. I am immensely grateful to them, and to the editors of *Africa* for inviting this conversation.

Residual Governance explores how South Africans have lived with – and contested – the wastes generated by a century of mining and the broader system of racial capitalism that created and benefited from those wastes. Gold and uranium extraction turned South Africa's Witwatersrand plateau inside out, producing colossal mine dumps that bisect the city of Johannesburg. Colonialism and apartheid intensified the discrimination wrought by mine dust, placing millions of Black residents downwind of the waste band. Still today, winter winds blow radioactive dust from these