

Critical Minerals Symposium: Post-Symposium Reflections  
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It has been almost a week since the Critical Minerals Symposium, but my head is still buzzing from the rich, layered discussions generated by our fantastic speakers and participants. They are from diverse disciplinary backgrounds: curatorship, environmental humanities, geology, art and literary studies, media studies, architecture, labour history, psychology, sustainability consulting, and more. Given the breadth of their expertise, it was unsurprising, yet still exciting, to see such a wide range of themes and discussions emerge over the course of the day. These included critical minerals' historical connections to knowledge and their role in the current digital and AI transition (Dr Tom Nurmi); and a 'critical' history of critical minerals in relation to colonial extractivism, war geology, and today's distrust of mining and mining companies (Panel I's speakers: Dr Nicholas McGee, Dr Gustave Lester, Dr Geertje Schuitema). Dr Dipali Mathur's paper on the fictions of the 'green' energy transition and the grim prospect of Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals dropped a bomb in the room, while Dr Aileen Doran's insight as a sustainability and risk consultant inspired us on how to imagine and to work for a more just transition.

Panel III (Speakers: Alexia Bozas, Ritam Dutta, Dr Gary Boyd)—and in fact papers from other panels too—demonstrated the unique affordances of literature, film, and the arts in imagining and critiquing critical minerals. Our feature paper by Camille Mary Sharp discussed the significance of confronting museums as extractive institutions in our efforts to create a just and sustainable mineral future. Our conversations also returned repeatedly to questions of how we teach, research, and communicate our work ethically and critically in the face of the extractive realities we live in. These questions were most committedly handled by our speakers in our last panel themed 'Critical Methodologies and Research Ethics' (Speakers: Dr Helene Birkeli, Dr Kelly Richards, Camille Britton, Dr Padraig Murphy)

I was amazed by how deeply our speakers and participants engaged with each other despite their different disciplinary backgrounds and approaches to critical minerals. It was evident that we were all animated by shared concerns about critical minerals and the narratives shaping the green energy transition.

Check out some of the reflections from our amazing participants; each offers a window into the vibrant conversations we shared.

Q1

The use of the word  
"displacement"  
and its many meanings  
across disciplines

The repeated  
theme of the  
material realities of  
CRMs vs. their  
immaterial applications  
⇒ making them visible

I see a stronger  
connection between  
geoscience &  
humanities +  
history than  
I thought possible

Image/idea: that  
there is no clear  
"solution" to the  
crisis facing (except  
a move away from  
capitalist exploitation...)

① Ideas on how  
the message about  
Net Zero/Green  
Transition's dirty  
reality can be  
disseminated to  
wider publics  
(non-academic).

~~The~~ relevance of  
art— aesthetics, film,  
photography, colourants,  
poetry, and more—is  
critical to any history  
of Critical Minerals

Importance of  
metals in  
art & art in  
communication

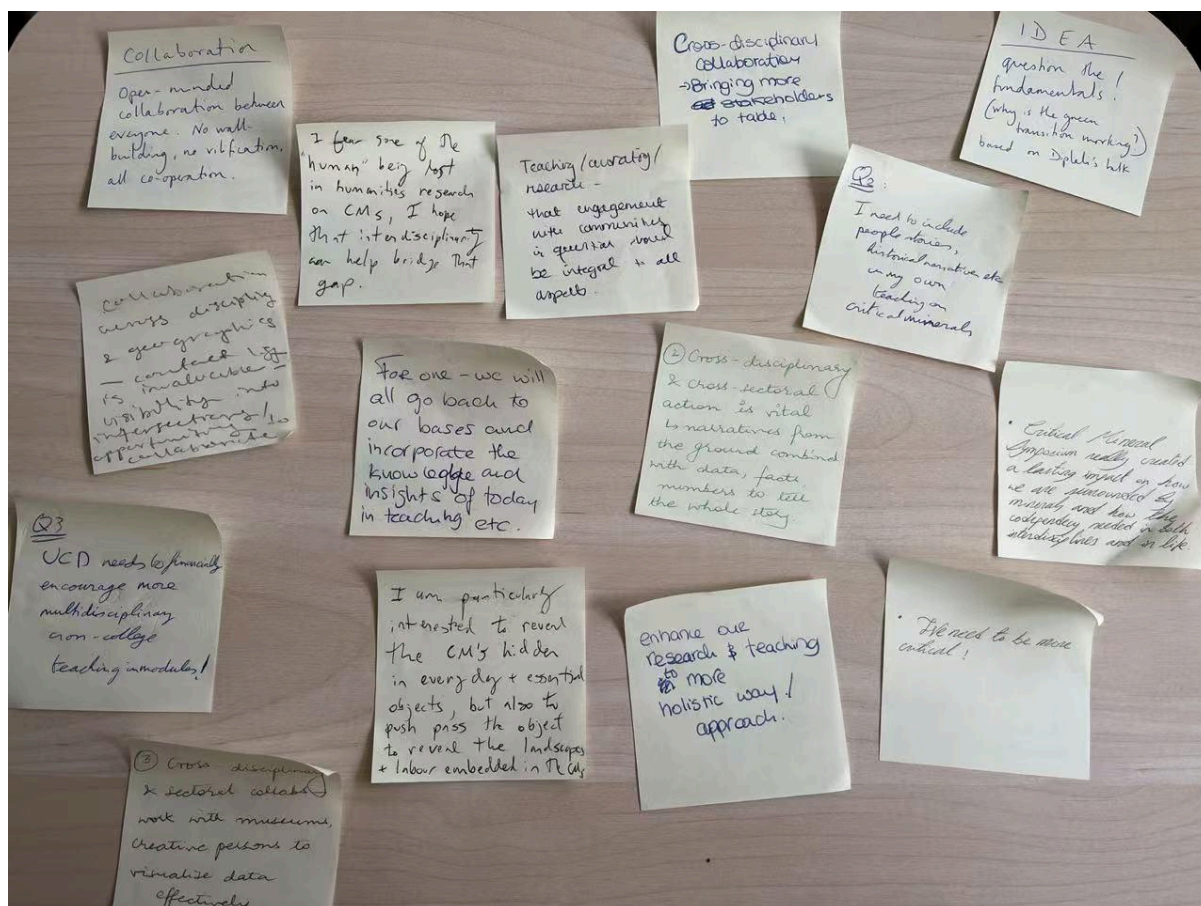
Histories, Blocks  
- Maps!!!  
- Fluctuation  
of CMS (Classi-  
fication) &  
movement of  
these working  
w/ them across  
and perspectives

There are so many  
more layers to  
critical minerals  
than I thought  
this morning.

Cheating / Generating  
more interdisciplinary  
& trans-disciplinary  
spaces to create  
opportunities to  
explore/ discover  
existing fields  
suffering from  
errors - constraints

The idea that Green  
policies are basically  
misleading.  
On top of that I  
liked Dr. Gustave Nestor's  
paper on Non-Geology.





A few threads that resonated strongly:

- Arts and humanities are indispensable for any study of critical minerals. One participant shared that the symposium fundamentally changed his earlier misunderstandings about the role of arts and humanities in this field.
- 'Holistic' teaching and ethical research matter. We must keep interrogating the stories told about minerals, extractivism, and sustainability in our classrooms and research envelopments, and keep making space for interdisciplinary, ethical, and reflective approaches.
- Interdisciplinary conversation and collaboration are essential for challenging the illusions and tidy narratives surrounding sustainability and green transition technologies.

The Critical Minerals Symposium has already sparked budding ideas for collaborations in various forms, and, on top of these, the development of a Critical Minerals Research Caucus, a member-driven community. If you would like to join, please email [ge.tang@ucd](mailto:ge.tang@ucd), or [getangvic19@gmail.com](mailto:getangvic19@gmail.com), with your name, email address, affiliation, and research interests, to be added to the Google Groups.