

EXTRACTIVISM

Extractivism Annual International Conference 2024

Comparing Extractivist Regimes: Natural Resources in the Global Paths towards Sustainability

We welcome applications for our *Extractivism Annual International Conference 2024* at the University of Kassel. Extractivism.de is a collaborative research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) based at the University of Kassel and the Philipps University of Marburg. We research natural resource extractivism in Latin America and the Maghreb and its many societal, economic and political interconnections. This year's conference will focus on *extractivist regimes* and the many pathways towards sustainability that countries and actors in different parts of the world are pursuing. Extractive regimes cover the set of formal and informal institutions, crucial actors and the relational constellations they form, and the many social practices they employ to regulate the input, extraction, processing, distribution and consumption of raw materials and the corresponding energy turnovers. We welcome applications from scholars working on extractivism, sustainability and global development from a diverse set of disciplines and backgrounds, from social sciences and the humanities, including economics, sociology, political science, culture studies, international relations, anthropology, and history.

The conference will delve into the multifaceted dimensions of extractivism, dissecting its historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and future trajectories. Applicants can choose different themes, ranging from issues that interrogate the entanglements of history, coloniality, and unequal exchange that shape modern extractivist practices to critical examinations of the new green windows of opportunity, the return of industry policies and the many extractivist traps of the current energy transition. We also explore who the key actors of extractivist regimes are, how alliances are built, legitimised and challenged, and how myths of growth and development based on raw materials emerge and influence policymaking. The conference also confronts the complexities of green transition, unmasking the darker sides of sustainability, its exclusions and backlashes, and the role of financialisation and capital flows in these regimes.

Abstracts should be up to 300 words and indicate one of the six themes described below.

Deadline: 15.03.2024

Send the application in a single PDF and further questions to info@extractivism.de

GEFÖRDERT VOM

U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

Philipps



Universität
Marburg



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

Conference Themes

1) The rise of the extractivism regimes: taking history, coloniality and unequal exchange seriously

Humans have always extracted resources from nature for survival and social reproduction. However, that does not mean that extractivist regimes – a specific economic and political order that reproduces itself through institutions, actor constellations and global forces – existed since ever. When can we trace the origins of extractivist regimes? This theme explores the dynamics that led to the rise of extractivist regimes, taking into consideration the inherent unequal division of labour in which the global patterns of commodity trade emerged. This theme seeks to outline the factors conditioned by colonialism, imperialism and exploitation as well as important elements of divergence within the global peripheries that emerged due to the relevance of natural-resource exportation on their pre- and post-colonial development paths.

2) Green windows of opportunity and its pitfalls: (re)insertion of the Global South and the new development states

Decarbonisation is simultaneously leading to a race for new raw materials and a renewal of industrial policies that conform to a green agenda. This theme explores how Global South states can face the energy transition as a window of opportunity to reassess growth strategies and alter their development trajectories and their insertion in the international system. What are the new economic and political strategies that emerge under the green discourse? This theme centres on the countries capable of taking advantage of this global recalibration to mobilise the needed resources, implement new policies and successfully establish links between their extractivist sectors with other productive levels of the economy to ignite necessary structural transformation and promote development.

3) Power players in extractivist regimes: balancing coalitions, alliances, class struggles and veto actors

Any prospect of change implies shaking the relations of power that underpin a current regime of production and organisation and rebalancing of competing actors. Who set the terms of the debate concerning development, and who has preferential access to rents under which conditions? Who are the veto actors that can uphold the transformation process? Which are the domestic and international players influencing decision-making, industrial policy and technological choice? This theme focuses on the actors and political coalitions within extractivist regimes, emphasising their mechanisms of gaining legitimacy and dominance and their adaptation capability, particularly in terms of energy transition and sustainable development. It examines the many inter-sectorial and inter-class alliances built in a specific commodity-led growth path and the distribution of power among actors that control extraction, production, distribution, finance and technology.

4) Myths of development and (de) growth: discourses, narratives, expectations and national ideas

Extractivism is usually presented as a ticket towards economic growth and social welfare. Global South countries often outline their policy agendas under the promise of transforming resource richness into development. This theme investigates the many discourses and narratives that permeate the social perceptions of growth, particularly concerning expectations of modernity, the state's function, nationalist drives and public goods provision. How do myths of development emerge? Do the rising agendas on decarbonisation, sustainability, and green transition also create their mythologies and narratives? This theme explores the historical and contemporary discourses surrounding development, the impact of narratives on public perceptions, the role of expectations in shaping policy agendas concerning growth, and the interplay between national ideas and the pursuit of development models.

5) Casting light on hidden extractivist realities: the dark sides of sustainability, exclusions and backlashes of the green transition

Among back-and-forths between green growth sceptics and degrowth enthusiasts lies complex questions of sustainability to whom, when, where and at what costs. Powerful countries and multinational companies seek green resources amidst growing global inequalities, geopolitical conflicts, societal politicisation, and polarisation. This theme sheds light on the dark sides of sustainability, stressing how the emerging order can be even more exclusionary than the current one. Under a "green coating", many mining projects are on the rise, causing environmental harm and showing disregard for local communities' needs and wants. Suppliers face higher market entry barriers, unequal power dynamics and environmental regulations that seem to lock the Global South further in extractivism. Simultaneously, nationalist narratives emerge in the North and South as a reaction to fear of change. This theme stresses, thus, the many dangers of implementing a global transition in a highly unequal world and the need to discuss transitions in the plural, respecting different contexts and needs.

6) Capital flows and sustainability: the nexus between financialisation and extractivism

While extractive sectors often receive significant inflows of foreign direct investments, and transnational corporations are highly engaged in mining and extracting natural resources, this setting underwent far-reaching dynamics in recent years. With the rise of global finance, new financial players have emerged, and new economic flows can occur within the current global financial architecture. These processes, usually dubbed financialisation, not only intervene in the current processes of global extractivism but also shape the trajectory of energy and raw material transitions. Where does the money to finance extractivism come from, who is investing in the extraction of renewables, and how does finance shape extractivism?