

Social Extractivism

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Extractivism is a core activity of the capitalist and colonial system that, throughout the centuries, has facilitated the transfer of natural goods from colonies to the colonizers' countries of the wealthy global minority (a.k.a. the Global North). This legacy is perpetuated today by huge transnational corporations.

This economic model that benefits only the few deprives the majority of the world's population of their traditional ways of subsistence and care for local ecosystems. This causes local and/or national impoverishment, the violation of human and natural rights, and increasing dependency on dominant powers. Its effects are nearly all irreversible, and they spread mainly across the countries of the colonized global majority (a.k.a. the Global South), condemning them to be mere providers of raw materials and cheap labor while destroying biodiversity, hindering production and industrialization, and preventing intergenerational justice.

Extractivism has many faces. It doesn't only comprise the exploitation of natural resources and the disruption of local economies, but it's also an expansive extractivism that causes harm in cultural, epistemological, axiological, social, and spiritual ways. We can speak of multi-extractivism that legalizes the creation of sacrifice zones and sacrificial human beings and cultures, treating their lives as less valuable than others'.

Emptying territories of their legitimate and ancestral inhabitants can be a tactic prior to implementing extractive projects, or it can be a concurrent or subsequent effect of such projects. In any case, this violence aims to facilitate the actions of extractive companies by suppressing local resistance or weakening it, dividing communities or depriving them of their youth, who feel pressured by circumstances to leave their lands and move elsewhere with the illusion of a more dignified and promising life. Extreme cases of this policy lead directly to the complete destruction of nations.

Governments can contribute to this migration of mostly rural populations by failing to implement policies or changing legislation to promote and facilitate extractivism. This can include decreasing or eliminating taxes on businesses, providing subsidies to corporations, rendering labor exploitation invisible, and either failing to fight or even joining organized crime.

Sadly, in a racist global system that imposes a hierarchy of human lives, it's profitable to deprive populations of healthcare, water, food, traditional ways of life tied to their land, and force them to migrate or face persecution. Repression and death are normalized, rendered invisible, or counted as collateral damage of no importance to the market and technocracy. An extreme example of social extractivism is what Israel has been practicing against the Palestinian people, with a plan of ethnic cleansing and extermination that serves the theft of territory and natural goods. Therefore, armed forces are used as instruments of the system.

Media also play their part. Oppression demands the manipulation and concealment of the truth, as well as the shameless dissemination of disinformation so that the public doesn't know what's really happening in the world, such as the causes of wars and genocides, the roots of impoverishment of the global majority and regional conflicts,

and those responsible for climate change. This manipulation of communication that blocks information, reflection, and personal and community action accompanies and facilitates all forms of extractivism.

In conclusion, we must fight to uproot this extractivist system that kills millions of human beings and makes the planet uninhabitable. We must build paths of social and environmental justice to preserve the rights of people and of nature and to achieve peace and the defense of life. Likewise, it's necessary to demand that the dominating global minority pay its enormous ecological debt to the global majority, an amount that far exceeds the financial debts drowning these numerous, marginalized countries. As the episcopal conferences of the Global South have committed in advance of the COP30 climate talks, we must “promote economies based on solidarity, the ‘happy sobriety’ of *Laudato Si'* and the ‘Buen Vivir’ (‘Good Living’) of ancestral wisdom”.