

# Global Practices of Climate Justice

Block 3. Preparatory Session 08.04.2025 | Public Panel Discussion 15.04.2025

## A SUMMARY BY ELLA HARNISCH

The academic perspectives in block two already introduced both the complex structural nature of vulnerabilities to the climate crisis and the crucial importance of adopting an (environmental) justice lens when examining the causes of environmental catastrophes and potential solutions. Ultimately, all readings have served as a reminder that oppressive capitalist, racialized, and patriarchal structures are integral to developing an adequate understanding of climate justice. For this third block, this critical analytical focus is applied and expanded to globalized economic structures. This requires examining global value chains, as “the world economy’s backbone and central nervous system” (Hochachka 2023). Why is it important to become more aware of these global structures, how are they marked by injustice and how can we envision climate justice globally under these conditions?

Riofrancos (2022) raises concerns about Global North countries increasingly “onshoring” the extraction of critical resources to their own territory. As the author outlines, critical minerals required for renewable energy production have traditionally been “offshored” by countries in the Global North to countries in the Global South; a practice met with strong resistance by local communities and activists generally due to the “brutal exploitation of labor and devastating social and environmental consequences”. Importantly, these practices prevail, as visible in the “Manifesto for an Ecosocial Energy Transition From the Peoples of the South” (2023) that criticizes particularly the increase in resource extraction agreements that supply the raw materials needed to act out the “clean/green energy transition”. Riofrancos warns about precisely those diverging inequalities within Global North countries the second block has introduced us to. Onshoring resource extraction may evade

neocolonial exploitation, although this will prevail in other forms, but poor, racialized, marginalized, often Indigenous communities in the North will suffer. Relatedly, Matthews and Silva (2024) powerfully call for scholars in the field of sustainable supply chain management to adopt justice lenses to unravel postcolonial economic structures. Otherwise, in the authors’ view, academics are complicit in the violent extractive practices the “sustainability” label makes invisible (77). Both Hochachka (2023) and Grabs et al. (forthcoming) narrow their analysis of global value chains to the coffee sector. The overarching consensus in both papers is that the coffee sector is already and increasingly deeply affected by the climate crisis and that this calls for climate-resilient interventions. Grabs et al. propose a multi-scalar climate resilience framework that centers on coffee farmer’s perspectives and needs.

In the panel discussion, climate justice advocate Alexandra Gavilano puts a strong focus on the oppressive structures that are fundamental to, among others, the coffee sector. From that, she concludes that we should question drinking coffee as self-evident. Rather, if we know about the realities of farmers and producers, and we try to develop a sense of relation to them, she urges individuals to reduce or eliminate coffee consumption. More generally, she proposes consuming locally as the only “sustainable” way forward. Janina Grabs’ research proposes ways to support farmers in potentially transforming their production to the realities of the climate crisis. However, as she explained in the prep session for the panel discussion, it is important to be sensitive to the generation-long cultural meaning coffee may have for some farmers. To Philip Schallberger, urging individuals to quit drinking coffee would contradict all his convictions and, if acted out, would harm his company. He is managing partner

of Kaffeemacher:innen, a coffee company with the vision of sourcing coffee more ethically along the value chain. For Philip Schallberger, this means creating “relational value chains”, manifested crucially by building co-operatives, as the company has done in Veracruz, Mexico. During the discussion, Philip Schallberger makes clear how the company profits from this practice; “if we want to buy the same coffee in five years, we need to have long-term vision”. Creating a committed relationship with partners in the Global South secures the company’s access to their coffee.

The discussion largely revolved around the implications of South-South economic relations for global trade. Max Bergman and Janina Grabs highlighted that there are no clear “good” or “bad” actors when it comes to improving conditions along global value chains—multinationals like Nestlé, arguably known as the “bad guy”, have de facto generated shared value for farmers in China. In Janina Grabs’s words, “they do good to the extent that it does them good”. I want to return to the initial questions of this summary: Why is it important to become more aware of

these global structures? How are they marked by injustice? Alexandra Gavilano powerfully urged the students, as privileged consumers removed from the bottom-end of the value chain, to feel personally responsible for just value chains – and conversely suffer with workers that endure inhumane working and living conditions. How can we envision climate justice globally under these conditions? To this question, the panelists gave diverging but arguably relatively clear-cut answers. Alexandra Gavilano sees the need for a global narrative, based on solidarity, that counters systems of oppression like capitalism, imperialism, and (neo-)colonialism. Philip Schallberger believes in producer-consumer structures among the Global North and South that are marked by relations of trust and loyalty. Max Bergman calls on us to radically shift our perspective of climate justice, since a drastic increase of future CO2 emissions will allow for millions of people in the Global South to experience a living standard that is normal to most in the Global North. Janina Grabs wants to advance relational global value chains that guarantee resilience along the whole value chain.

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