

# Global Practices of Climate Justice

Block 3. Preparatory Session 08.04.2025 | Public Panel Discussion 15.04.2025

## A SUMMARY BY LIZ VOSS

This block’s texts build a case that the current global economic systems, particularly global value chains (GVCs) and energy transitions, are often fundamentally unjust, unsustainable, and inadequate in the face of climate change. They critique efficiency-focused and top-down corporate approaches, highlighting the exploitative dynamics between the Global North and South. While they differ in scope (supply chains, coffee resilience, GVC governance, and energy transition), they converge on the need for transformative change rooted in justice, equitable power relations, and genuine sustainability, offering various frameworks and principles – from supply chain justice and relational governance to a full ecosocial transition – as pathways forward.

### Critiquing Dominant Paradigms

*(Efficiency, Corporate Sustainability, “Clean” Transitions)*

**Supply Chain Justice** argues that the dominant logic for supply chains should be *justice* (social, economic, environmental) rather than mere *efficiency*<sup>1</sup>. It critiques existing corporate sustainability efforts as often insufficient, failing to address structural inequalities or the postcolonial legacies embedded in many GVCs<sup>2</sup>. **Resilience of What and for Whom?** echoes this critique by showing how climate resilience initiatives, especially those driven by global actors (like corporations in the Global North), often prioritize *sectoral* resilience (maintaining coffee supply) over the *livelihood* resilience of farmers in the Global South<sup>3</sup>. These interventions often focus on helping farmers “hang in” rather than supporting transformative changes or

diversification that farmers themselves might prioritize<sup>4</sup>. **Manifesto for Ecosocial Transition** and **Shifting Mining** offer the most radical critiques. The Manifesto explicitly denounces the Global North’s “clean energy transitions” as a form of “green colonialism,” arguing they perpetuate extraction, sacrifice zones in the South, and deepen ecological debt to secure resources like lithium and cobalt<sup>5</sup>. Shifting Mining similarly argues that onshoring mining for these minerals misses the point of climate justice by failing to challenge the underlying predatory, extractive model<sup>6</sup>. **Transformative Potential of GVCs** contrasts ineffective, top-down, compliance-based GVC governance (often driven by Northern lead firms) with a more promising relational, collaborative model<sup>7</sup>.

### Highlighting Power Imbalances and Justice in GVCs

All tests address the power imbalances inherent in GVCs. **Supply Chain Justice** focuses on the historical roots of these imbalances in colonialism and how GVCs can actively drive injustice<sup>8</sup>. **Resilience of What and for Whom?** demonstrates these imbalances through the differing priorities for resilience across scales (global industry vs. national vs. local farmer<sup>9</sup>. **Transformative Potential of GVCs** examines how different governance structures within GVCs distribute power and value, suggesting relational governance can lead to more equitable outcomes<sup>10</sup>. **The Manifesto** frames the entire North-South relationship in the energy transition as one of neocolonial power imbalance<sup>11</sup>. **Shifting Mining** implicitly discusses the power dynamics that allow extractive industries to harm communities, regardless of location<sup>12</sup>.

1 (Matthews and Silva, p. 75)  
2 (Matthews and Silva, pp. 75-77, 79)  
3 (Grabs, J. et al., pp. 1, 3, 21, 36)  
4 (Grabs, J. et al., pp. 1, 4, 20-21)  
5 (Peoples of the Global South)  
6 (Riofrancos)

7 (Hochachka, pp. 2-4)  
8 (Matthews and Silva, pp. 76-77, 80)  
9 (Grabs, J. et al., pp. 3, 12, 36)  
10 (Hochachka, pp. 1-3)  
11 (Peoples of the Global South)  
12 (Riofrancos)

## Intersecting Climate Change, Sustainability, and Justice

Climate change serves as a critical backdrop for direct subject. **Resilience of What and for Whom?** and **Transformative Potential of GVCs** analyze climate impacts and adaptation within agricultural GVCs (coffee)<sup>13, 14</sup>. **Supply Chain Justice** links climate justice to broader environmental and social justice concerns within supply chains<sup>15</sup>. The **Manifesto** and **Shifting Mining** critically examine climate *mitigation* strategies (renewable energy transitions) through a justice lens, arguing current approaches are unjust and perpetuate harmful extractive dynamics<sup>16, 17</sup>.

## Proposing Alternatives and Pathways for Transformation

While critiquing the status quo, the texts also point towards alternative solutions. **Supply Chain Justice** advocates for embedding economic, social, and environmental justice principles into supply chain design and management, inspired by concepts like *Buen Vivir*<sup>18</sup>. **Resilience of What and for Whom?** implicitly calls for more farmer-centric approaches that support diversification and transformative capacity, not just adaptation within the existing system<sup>19</sup>. **Transformative Potential of GVCs** highlights relational governance – based on trust, collaboration, fair pricing, and mutual problem-solving – as a model that can foster genuine sustainability and resilience in GVCs, even amidst crises like climate change and pandemics<sup>20</sup>. The **Manifesto** offers the most comprehensive alternative vision: a radical, democratic, popular, gender-just, and regenerative ecosocial transition rooted in principles from the Global South, demanding energy democracy, sovereignty, reparations, and an end to extractivism<sup>21</sup>.

## Panel Discussion

The panel discussion on 15<sup>th</sup> April was quite thought-provoking. First, Max Bergman of University of Basel highlighted three areas of concern:

*Legitimization* We, as scholars and consumers in the Global North, need to ask if we are legitimate spokespeople and audience members. Of note is the fact that the top 3 post-colonial studies journals are based in the UK (Oxford, Cambridge, and Taylor and Francis). Are we in fact colonizing the climate justice movement?

*Models of Climate Change* Climate change models are typically aligned with conflict models: Environment vs. Big Business, Society (individuals) vs. Corporations, or Sustainable

Development Goal vs. Sustainable Development Goal (some work well together, but others are in opposition).

*Justice* What kind of justice are we fighting for? Distributive, intergenerational (which generations?), interspecies or ecological. We need to define the parameters and goals so that progress can be made.

Next, Alexandra Gavilano, an activist for socially just systemic change, spoke to us about the specifics of coffee and climate justice. Her opening quote was that, “Your coffee is extracted from the veins of black and brown countries,” and she pointed out that this is still true of fair-trade coffee or when we pay a premium price. Unfortunately, coffee isn’t location-adaptive; the “coffee belt” is along the Equator between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. We cannot expand the area available for coffee farms, and in fact the suitable land for coffee farms is estimated to fall by 50% by 2050. More shocking facts: 60% of coffee species are at risk of extinction. 125 million people depend on coffee for their livelihood. 25 million small farmers produce 80% of the world’s coffee.

Janina Grabs of University of Basel spoke to us about climate justice along the coffee value chain. She expanded on Alexandra’s presentation, pointing out that the coffee belt is and will continue to be subject to the most severe impacts of climate change, along with droughts and plant diseases the farmers are already experiencing. Although coffee prices are at a 50 year high, those higher prices aren’t making it back up the value chain to fairly compensate the farmers. She proposed several suggestions:

Equal sharing of financial losses along the value chain, which would help producers make up for shortfalls.

Support of farmer-led adaptation and/or transformation of livelihoods, which could include more adaptive types of plants, different production methods, transitioning out of coffee production, or transitioning out of agriculture entirely.

Justice in Climate Change Mitigation, meaning the full responsibility for acquiring and implementing technological advancements wouldn’t fall entirely on the producers, but would also be spread along the value chain.

Our final speaker was Philipp Schallberger of Kaffeemacher:innen. He explained the “km” business model, which is a steward-owned company. They operate in relational value chains and their goal is to make coffee better, with better taste and under good conditions for everyone along the

<sup>13</sup> (Grabs, J. et al., pp. 1, 2, 4)

<sup>14</sup> (Hochachka, pp. 1, 2, 4)

<sup>15</sup> (Matthews and Silva, pp. 78-79)

<sup>16</sup> (Peoples of the Global South)

<sup>17</sup> (Riofrancos)

<sup>18</sup> (Matthews and Silva, pp. 75, 77, 80)

<sup>19</sup> (Grabs, J. et al., pp. 2, 4, 35, 40-41)

<sup>20</sup> (Hochachka, pp. 1-2, 9-10, 12-13)

<sup>21</sup> (Peoples of the Global South)

coffee chain. He acknowledged that the coffee industry has a dark past and a fragile future; it is in need of real resilience, for which the current market is not preparing themselves.

Once the panelists completed their opening statements, they moved on to specific questions posed by Charline Depoorter, a post-doc researcher at University of Basel's Sustainability Research Group. The need for a degrowth movement was mentioned, as members of the emerging middle classes around the world want to live like consumers in the Global North. We shouldn't be telling these consumers how to consume, but there also isn't room in the world for endless consumption. The world also needs to move to more locally produced foods in general; many products that Global North citizens have in their kitchens and pantries are only grown in the Equatorial countries and are therefore vulnerable to climate change. And interestingly enough, instant coffee is the most consumed coffee product in the coffee-producing countries; those citizens often cannot afford the premium product.

Also discussed was the assertion that the "free market" was (and is) a fairy tale; although there is inarguably a global economy, all countries have levied tariffs against each other for different products and there is a "race to the

bottom" as everyone searches for alternative (cheaper) supply chains. And while the Global North shouldn't be policing the consumption habits of the Global South, we do need to be aware that in the next 20 years, India will start producing more CO2 emissions than North America and Europe combined, just to offer their citizens the basics. But if it's 50°C and Indians want refrigeration or air conditioning, how can we blame them? Can the Global North reduce their emissions quickly enough to offset the increases from the Global South? Where is the balance between consumption and sustainability? Ultimately, we may find that balance via resilient supply chains, although what exactly that means is open to some interpretation. We don't want supply chains that only benefit those at the top but not the people on the ground. We need relational linkages that can withstand shocks to the market, whether they come from a global pandemic or a climate disaster. Resilience comes from carrying the risk together, as well as the benefits, and will start at a small scale – person-to-person cooperation. It may be possible to create such strong links that people in the Global North feel the fires, droughts, and floods plaguing the farmers in the Global South, which may be what it takes for the Global North to start making meaningful changes at the necessary rate.

Grabs, J., et al. *Resilience of What and for Whom? Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in the Global, Ethiopian, and Tanzanian Coffee Sectors*. 2025.  
 Hochachka, G. "Climate Change and the Transformative Potential of Value Chains." *Ecological Economics*, vol. 206, 24 Jan. 2023, [doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.107747](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.107747).  
 Matthews, L., and M. E. Silva. "Supply Chain Justice." *The Supply Chain: A System in Crisis*, edited by S. Gold and A. Wieland, Edward Elgar Publishing, Apr. 2024, pp. 74–83.

Peoples of the Global South. "Manifesto for an Ecosocial Energy Transition from the Peoples of the South - FPIF." *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 9 Feb. 2023, [fpif.org/manifesto-for-an-ecosocial-energy-transition-from-the-peoples-of-the-south/](https://fpif.org/manifesto-for-an-ecosocial-energy-transition-from-the-peoples-of-the-south/).  
 Riofrancos, T. "Shifting Mining from the Global South Misses the Point of Climate Justice." *Foreign Policy*, 7 Feb. 2022, [foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/07/renewable-energy-transition-critical-minerals-mining-onshoring-lithium-evs-climate-justice/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/07/renewable-energy-transition-critical-minerals-mining-onshoring-lithium-evs-climate-justice/).