

Global Practices of Climate Justice

Block 3. Preparatory Session 08.04.2025 | Public Panel Discussion 15.04.2025

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On the global level, the problem of climate different levels – farmers, national governments, change is not only about reducing emissions – it is global firms – often pursue conflicting goals. also about confronting deep-rooted inequalities To delve deeper into these dynamics, the authors embedded in global power asymmetries, supply propose four guiding questions: resilience chains, economic dependencies, and historical of what, to what, for what, and due to what. injustices. As climate impacts intensify, These invite us to consider which systems are especially in vulnerable regions like coffee- being protected, what types of shocks are producing areas of the Global South, justice prioritized, what outcomes are pursued, and what demands more than incremental responses: it kinds of capacities – absorptive, adaptive, or calls for systemic change. Drawing on academic transformative – are being strengthened.

literature, real-world case studies, and insights

from a panel that brings together perspectives Their findings reveal that most interventions from academia, practice, and activism, this focus on maintaining supply chains, often summary highlights the contradictions of current sidelining farmers' actual needs. The authors efforts. It emphasizes the need for equitable argue that context-specific, farmer-centric solutions that move beyond technocratic fixes approaches that combine all three strategies toward genuine transformation.

(adaptive, absorptive, and transformative) are essential. They also stress that one-size-

Some of the readings we covered explore climate fits-all approaches are unlikely to succeed; justice through the lens of global value chains instead, climate strategies must be flexible (GVCs), particularly in sectors like coffee and and sensitive to local contexts. Designing critical minerals. This is exemplified in Gail resilience together with producers, rather Hochachka's study of a Guatemalan coffee chain. than for them, is crucial to avoiding a new The lead firm in this case employs "relational wave of externally imposed solutions that governance" – an approach built on trust, long- replicate older patterns of inequality. Their term partnerships, and collaborative problem- findings reveal that most interventions focus solving, rather than control through top-down on maintaining supply chains, often reflecting standards and audits. The author argues that the priorities of global markets rather than this governance model allows for more generative farmers themselves. The authors stress that responses to overlapping crises such as climate one-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to change and economic precarity. However, while succeed; instead, climate strategies must be the paper offers a hopeful example, it also flexible and sensitive to local contexts. They highlights a persistent challenge: such models argue for participatory, farmer-led solutions often remain isolated and reliant on exceptional that combine absorptive, adaptive, and actors. Without systemic shifts in power transformative capacities – allowing farmers to relations or market incentives, transformation "hang in," "step up," or "step out" depending remains the exception, not the rule.

Designing resilience together with producers, rather than for them, is essential to avoiding a new wave of externally imposed solutions that replicate older patterns of inequality. Similar patterns are also seen in other

Grabs et al. take these ideas further by examining how resilience is defined across the sector. Using a multi- scalar framework and data from both global interventions and fieldwork in Ethiopia and Tanzania, they show that actors at

sectors – for example, in the extraction of critical minerals. Thea Riofrancos critiques the growing trend of “green onshoring” – efforts by wealthy nations to relocate mining for critical minerals like lithium and cobalt from the Global South to the Global North. While framed as a move toward energy independence and ethical sourcing, she argues that such strategies often ignore the deeper structures of extractivism. Simply relocating mining sites does not address the social and ecological harms of resource extraction, nor does it challenge the unequal distribution of risks and benefits. Instead, while outsourcing responsibility to producers, it reproduces a familiar pattern: prioritizing industrial growth over community consent and environmental justice. For climate justice to be meaningful, Riofrancos emphasizes, transitions must be democratic and rooted in the needs and rights of affected communities – not just cleaner in appearance.

This call for structural change also applies to critical minerals. In the article “Supply Chain Justice,” Lee Matthews and Minelle E. Silva argue that dominant sustainability initiatives often fail to address the deeper inequalities embedded in global trade. Rather than treating justice as a matter of certification or efficiency, they call for a more fundamental transformation of supply chains – one that prioritizes agency, fair compensation, and participatory governance. Current models, they suggest, frequently leave global hierarchies intact. A justice-oriented approach must move beyond industrial growth over community consent and market logics to center labor rights, living incomes, and structural change. In this framing, justice is not a supplement to sustainability but its foundation. These theoretical and structural critiques came into sharp focus during the panel discussion featuring Philipp Schallberger, Janina Grabs, Max Bergman, and Alexandra Gavilano.

These critiques of green extractivism are expanded in the Manifesto for an Ecosocial Energy Transition from the Peoples of the South. The manifesto offers a sharp collective critique of the dominant approaches to decarbonization. While much of the global discourse focuses on technological solutions and securing mineral supply chains, the authors argue that such strategies often reinforce historical injustices. They call for a transition that is not only ecological but also reparative – acknowledging the ecological debt owed by the Global North and centering the sovereignty of communities in the South. The manifesto rejects green colonialism in all its forms, insisting that any truly just transition must challenge extractivist models, redistribute power, and prioritize social well-being over corporate profit. In this framing, climate justice is inseparable from anti-colonial and democratic struggles for systemic transformation.

Centered on the coffee value chain, the conversation revealed how climate justice plays out in both policy and practice. Schallberger offered a practitioner’s view from within the coffee industry, highlighting the possibilities and limitations of building more equitable relationships with producers. Grabs and Bergman emphasized how well-intentioned sustainability frameworks can reproduce existing hierarchies if they ignore local contexts. Gavilano, speaking from activist experience, challenged the audience to see climate justice not as a technical fix, but as a political struggle rooted in everyday life. The panel underscored that a just transition did not offer easy answers – but underscored the need for cross-sector collaboration that centers local voices, redistributes power, and moves beyond symbolic action.

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