R8W Green Extractivism is not a Climate Solution

Proposer:	DWARS (Netherlands), GEV (Giovani Europeisti Verdi)
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Motion text

Green Extractivism is Not a Climate Solution

Standing With Resistance Against Extractivism in the EU and Beyond

The energy transition fostered by the European Green Deal is presented as a win-win pathway to combat climate change and sustain economic growth through the deployment of low-carbon technologies (European Commission, 2019). However, the energy transition is a materials transition. Starting from supply of raw materials for technology manufacture, EU demand for rare earth metals is projected to grow six-fold by 2030 and seven-fold by 2050 compared to 2020, reaching over 3 million tonnes in a low-demand scenario and nearly 5 million tonnes in a high-demand scenario (Carrara et al., 2023).

While replacing a fossil-based energy system with a renewables-based one is a necessity and a historical responsibility for the EU, the push to secure resources for the European Green Deal remains rooted in a neoliberal capitalist logic of climate reductionism, prioritising CO^2 emissions while overlooking deeper socio-ecological injustices.

Considering that

- mineral extraction comes with severe environmental, social, and health impacts;
- more than 90% of the current raw material supply to Europe comes from outside the Eurozone (European Parliament and Council, 2024);
- more than half of the Strategic Partners for Raw Materials are Europe ex-colonies (Raw Materials Diplomacy, n.d.);
- more than half of energy transition mineral projects are located on or

near Indigenous People’s lands (Owen et al., 2022);

We conclude that the EU is transitioning towards a green economy relying on an extractivist model[1], and is systematically externalising the costs of the green transition outside of Europe, as well as to its ‘peripheries’[2].With this resolution, we aim to amplify the demands of movements who have been resisting this exploitative model inside and outside of Europe.

Recognising the myriad of resistance movements, we want to bring to attention a few examples. Indigenous Peoples in northern Argentina are resisting lithium mining, challenging green extractivism driven by the Global North’s energy transition (Argento & Puente, 2023). The "lithium triangle" (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile) supplies about 85% of the EU’s lithium imports (Murguia & Obaya, 2024), with extraction encroaching on Indigenous lands and protected areas. Lithium mining generates waste, alters landscapes, contaminates water, and harms local ecosystems. Most critically, its high water consumption worsens scarcity in arid regions, threatening subsistence farming and pastoralism (Voskoboynik & Andreucci, 2021).

West Papuan tribes, political groups, and customary and civil society organisations are still resisting active colonialism, human rights abuses (Amnesty International, 2021), genocidal violence (Brundige et al., 2003; United Liberation Movement for West Papua, 2023) and have been contesting an extractive exploitation of their ancestral land (United Liberation Movement for West Papua, n.d.). Indonesia and the European Union have been negotiating the EU-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) trade agreement since 2016, pressuring the latter to remove restrictions on raw mineral exports and privatise the public energy sector. West Papuan Indigenous communities have not been consulted.

A new violent flare-up in what has been one of the most warn-torn regions for last twenty years has brought renewed attention to the historically overexploited area and peoples of central Africa in Congo (Global Conflict Tracker, 2025). The east of the country is a particularly resource-dense area, that has been mined and exploited by Western companies and its subsidiaries for centuries. 70% of the world’s cobalt, a crucial mineral for the development of batteries severely needed to power the energy transition Europe is currently on, is produced in Congo. It is also an incredibly ethnically diverse country, with over 200 ethnic groups. Reports by Amnesty International and local entities document forced evictions, sexual assaults, arson, and beatings related to the expansion of multinational mining companies. These transgressions disproportionately impact local communities, eroding their rights and means of subsistence (Amnesty International, 2023). Furthermore, all of the wealth generated from this extraction flees the country, or remains in the hands of a small local elite. There have been some efforts made, like the introduction of sustainable sourcing standards, but in reality these standards are rarely

applied, and still have enormous loopholes (Deberdt & Le Billon, 2022).

However, not only Global South countries are kept in a position of dependency. European ‘peripheries’, as well as poorer and rural areas within the EU, are also being exploited for growth in the core:

Serbia is witnessing a resurgence of green extractivism through the EU-backed push for lithium mining, despite widespread public resistance that previously halted such projects (Santos, 2024). Behind closed-door agreements and technocratic rhetoric, the government advances a top-down agenda that sidelines affected communities, undermines democratic participation, and replicates authoritarian patterns of resource exploitation (Markovic, 2024). In Portugal, the green transition masks a new wave of extractivism, with lithium mining projects threatening ecologically rich and culturally significant rural regions. Framed by industry and state actors through climate and innovation discourses, these projects override local opposition and imperil traditional livelihoods. For example, in Covas do Barroso, Portugal, a designated Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System, plans for Europe’s largest open-pit lithium mine threaten to displace communities and devastate ecosystems (EJAtlas, n.d.). Despite fierce local resistance, the government has advanced the project, granting land access to the mining company Savannah Resources. The grassroots movement Unidxs em Defesa de Covas do Barroso opposes this green extractivism, defending a vision of territory rooted in care, heritage, and ecological interdependence (Antonelli & Sini, 2024).

Thus, concerned that

- a greening and security discourse in the European transition agenda hides its reliance on resource appropriation from the Global South and the peripheries of Europe;

- mineral extraction is framed as essential for and compatible with sustainable development and climate change mitigation;

- only 5 Member States of the EU have ratified the ILO169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, protecting the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, including the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent to their relocation;

- the Critical Raw Materials Act limits the rights of Indigenous peoples and communities affected by extraction projects to consultations, ignoring the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent;

- current trade agreements impose an unsustainable neo-liberal European model of development based on infinite economic growth, privatisation of public sectors, nature commodification, and primacy of European import

desires over local and national needs and affected communities' rights, while also displacing and disregarding non-Eurocentric knowledge systems and worldviews;

Emphasising again the arguments made in previous FYEG resolutions "Indigenous rights are human rights!", and "A Degrowth Transition Towards Post-Growth Economies" and in FYEG's political platform that

- All trade agreements by the EU and by European countries must respect the rights of the the indigenous communities directly or indirectly affected in the counterpart and possibly in neighbouring states. This must entail respect for ILO Convention 169 alongside core human rights conventions. Furthermore, these indigenous communities must be consulted and represented in the discussions and evaluation of the agreement either by a representative or, where possible, a collective or council representing them;

- The devastation caused by neoliberal capitalism cannot be solved by the same expansionist principles with a green facade. A global political perspective is essential to address ecological injustices and the unequal distribution of impacts. This includes ending resource appropriation from the Global South by the Global North and debt cancellation, alongside urgent decarbonization by countries with the greatest historical emissions. Ignoring these issues can lead to eco-fascism, where wealthy nations externalise damage and collapse to poorer regions.

- Degrowth is a demand for effective decolonization. Countries in the global south should be free to organise their resources and labour around meeting human needs rather than around servicing Northern growth. Historically, the industrial growth in Europe and the subsequent expansion and industrialisation of its colonies were significantly facilitated by the pattern of appropriating raw materials, natural resources, and labour from the Global South through what has been named as ecological unequal exchange. Even following the withdrawal of colonial troops, the fundamental structure of the colonial economy endures, sustaining growth in the North through the continued appropriation, exploitation, and oppression of the South.

We as Federation of Young European Greens call upon

- the EU to question and move beyond a development model based on infinite economic growth, privatisation of commons, nature commodification, and thus extractivism;

- the EU to recognise and interact with different, non-extractive ways of relating to nature stemming from non-Eurocentric worldviews;

- the Greens/EFA to recognise the systemic plunder of resources from the Global South and the peripheries of Europe that is still being promoted by the European energy transition and recognise its unequal distribution of costs and benefits;

- the Greens/EFA to support the demands of resistance and grassroot movements such as those in West Papua, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Serbia and Portugal;

- Member States to address historical injustices by attending and committing to demands of redistribution and reparation;

- all Member States to ratify the ILO169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention;

- the European Commission to integrate the principles of Free, Prior and Informed consent for Indigenous and other affected communities into every trade agreement negotiation with external partners.

[1] Extractivism is a model of overexploitation where local communities and environments bear the damage without benefitting, leading to ecosystem depletion, harm to human health, and the erosion of knowledge through structural violence, particularly dispossession (Ojeda et al., 2022). It refers to labour appropriation through exploitative economic, social, and ecological relations, rooted in colonial legacies, rather than small-scale mining practices (Vela-Almeida & Karlsen, 2023; Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2019; Bruna, 2022).

[2] The core-periphery model of imperialism explains how wealth, power, and resources are concentrated in dominant "core" countries, while "periphery" countries remain economically dependent, exploited for raw materials and labour, and structurally prevented from developing on equal terms.

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