



Refocusing resistance for climate justice

COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris



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Editors

Leah Temper
Tamra Gilbertson

Contributors

Pere Ariza-Montobbio - FLACSO
Stefania Barca – University of Coimbra
Sam Bliss
Patrick Bond – University KwaZulu-Natal
Kevin Buckland – 350.org
Marcelo Calazans – FASE-ES, Brazil
Andrea Cardoso – ICTA, UAB
Maxime Combes – Attac, France
Tamra Gilbertson – Carbon Trade Watch
Hamza Hamouchene – Algeria Solidarity Campaign
Faith ka-Manzi – University of kwa-Zulu-Natal
Joan Martinez-Alier – ICTA, UAB
Daniela Meirelles – FASE-ES, Brazil
Leah Temper – ICTA, UAB
Lena Weber – Lund University

Series Editor: Beatriz Rodríguez-Labajos (UAB)

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(The Bridge Over Wedzin Kwah Wet'suwet'ten territory)
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Abstract

The climate and environmental justice debates are heating up ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21, scheduled for December this year in Paris. In theory, the conference objective is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change, from all the nations of the world.

However, within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), controversial schemes to supposedly protect the Earth's climate eclipse the urgent need to reduce emissions at source and phase out fossil fuels.

This report firstly lays out how activists are organizing towards Paris to confront the powers that are ignoring the popular mandate for taking serious action on climate change. In the second section, we take a broader perspective examining important and emerging discourses and alliances within the Climate Justice movement. Finally in the 3rd section we focus on the ongoing resistance of those living alongside exploitative projects – from forest-grabbers to pipelines – and who are the most powerful force for keeping fossil fuels under the ground.

In Paris, there is no hope that the official conference will put on the table the Climate and ecological Debt owed from the wealthy to those who are being dispossessed. Yet in the streets and across the world, a decentralized movement of “Blockadia” is opposing fracking, pipelines, false solutions and dirty coal, racking up victories and gaining strength. This report aims to send a strong message, that far from believing the UN can save the world's climate, resistance to global climate injustice and inequality is alive and building from the ground up.

Keywords

Blockadia Climate Justice Pipelines Fossil Capitalism Extreme Energy
Responsibility Unburnable fuels Financialization

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Foreword

Conflicts over resource extraction or waste disposal increase in number as the world economy uses more materials and energy. Civil society organizations (CSOs) active in Environmental Justice issues focus on the link between the need for environmental security and the defence of basic human rights.

The EJOLT project (Environmental Justice Organizations, Liabilities and Trade, www.ejolt.org) is an FP7 Science in Society project that runs from 2011 to 2015. EJOLT brings together a consortium of 23 academic and civil society organizations across a range of fields to promote collaboration and mutual learning among stakeholders who research or use Sustainability Sciences, particularly on aspects of Ecological Distribution. One main goal is to empower environmental justice organizations (EJOs), and the communities they support that receive an unfair share of environmental burdens to defend or reclaim their rights. This has been done through a process of two-way knowledge transfer, encouraging participatory action research and the transfer of methodologies with which EJOs, communities and citizen movements can monitor and describe the state of their environment, and document its degradation, learning from other experiences and from academic research how to argue in order to avoid the growth of environmental liabilities or ecological debts. Thus EJOLT supports EJOs' capacity in using scientific concepts and

methods for the quantification of environmental and health impacts, increasing their knowledge of environmental risks and of legal mechanisms of redress. On the other hand, EJOLT has greatly enriched research in the Sustainability Sciences through mobilising the accumulated 'activist knowledge' of the EJOs and making it available to the sustainability research community. Finally, EJOLT has helped to translate the findings of this mutual learning process into the policy arena, supporting the further development of evidence-based decision making and broadening its information base. We focus on the use of concepts such as ecological debt, environmental liabilities and ecologically unequal exchange, in science and in environmental activism and policy-making.

The overall aim of EJOLT is to improve policy responses to and support collaborative research on environmental conflicts through capacity building of environmental justice groups and multi-stakeholder problem solving. A key aspect is to show the links between increased metabolism of the economy (in terms of energy and materials), and resource extraction and waste disposal conflicts so as to answer the driving questions:

Which are the causes of increasing ecological distribution conflicts at different scales, and how to turn such conflicts into forces for environmental sustainability?

Throughout the EJOLT Project between 2011 and 2015 we have produced as a team several reports on legal strategies for communities to claim environmental justice, the economic valuation of environmental liabilities and many other issues. Four previous reports are very closely related to this final report on Climate Justice and can be seen as stepping stones to it. They are Report n. 2 with the title *The CDM cannot deliver the money in Africa* with several examples of scams disguised as “clean development mechanism” investments; Report n. 6, a major study with the title *Towards a Post-Oil Civilization. Yasunization and other initiatives to leave oil in the soil*; Report n. 11 on *International Law and the Ecological Debt*; and Report n. 18 on *The Ecological Debt: history, meaning and relevance for Environmental Justice*.

The present final report is written with a sense of urgency hoping it will be used before and during the COP 21 in Paris in December 2015. It is composed of three sections. The first lays out how activists are organizing towards Paris to confront the powers that are ignoring the popular mandate for taking serious action on climate change. In the second section, we take a broader perspective examining important and emerging discourses and alliances within the Climate Justice movement. Finally in the 3rd section we focus on the ongoing resistance of those living alongside exploitative projects – from forest-grabbers to pipelines – and argue that these are the most powerful force for keeping fossil fuels under the ground.