

EXTRACTIVISM, RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND ACCUMULATION IN A “CLIMATE-SMART” WORLD: THE RISE OF GREEN EXTRACTIVISM

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Imperialism and colonialism’s historical economic, social and environmental asymmetric and exploitative exchange relations shaped and paved the way for current dynamics of global capitalism. Contemporary capital accumulation is mostly based and fed on what we today call ‘extractivism’; where unindustrialized global South countries work as extractive hubs by supplying global demand for raw materials, primary commodities and energy to industrialized countries. Through empirical and theoretical development, this research sees extractivism as a process that feeds accumulation by differentiated ways of removing and appropriating nature (natural resources) through differentiated levels of labour exploitation.

Nevertheless, the new scramble for Africa presents continuities from the old scramble. However, it presents new trends brought up by the current environmental crisis, both as a context and as a driving force of resource grabbing. Contemporary global capitalism dynamics, particularly climate change narratives and its implications for the system, call to go beyond the agrarian question’s focus on ‘classes of landed property, capital and labour in the countryside’ (Bernstein, 2010b). Answering to this call, this research aims to explore and tackle the intellectual deficit in Marxist agrarian political economy, particularly on matters related to political ecology concerning the development of productive forces and their ecological dynamics.

Thus, the relevance to address these two drivers of resource grabbing — extractivism and climate change policies — in their intersection point, that is, resource grabbing. Both are approached as mechanisms of appropriation of resources that produce social, economic and ecological implications to be considered in the current agrarian question debates. The study will be guided by the following central research question: ‘How does the intersection of extractivism and green policies relate to the global resource rush and shape global patterns of accumulation and rural livelihoods?’. Engaging in critical agrarian research, based on political economy and ecology lens, to analyse dynamics of extractivism, environmental policies and rural livelihoods, requires both macroeconomic analysis and micro implications to rural livelihoods. On one side, macroeconomic data is relevant to understand and analyse trade relations between regions, economic performance of a country and so on. On the other side, micro implications to social re-production, including patterns of agrarian change, particularly grasping changes over economic, social and ecological relations households is also needed. However, the research is predominantly qualitative.

By analysing the implementation and outcomes of green policies, this study shows that new strategies of capital accumulation arise through the creation of new commodities, markets, vehicles of accumulation and ways of legitimizing capital accumulation. A new and ‘greener’ frontier of accumulation is constituted. These emerging processes of commodification bring along new waves of expropriation that further cut into the necessary consumption of rural populations. Insights from empirical cases explored in this research show how this new wave of green investments and projects, directly linked to climate change concerns, are further expropriating livelihoods and fuelling capital accumulation in the name of the fight against climate change.

Through the experience of Mozambique’s climate change policy implementation (particularly Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)) this study will show that green policies imply, beyond resource grabbing, the

expropriation of emissions rights from rural poor. By using the extractivism framework, one is able to grasp how emission rights are expropriated and transferred in favour of external accumulation. This gives rise to a new variation of extractivism that I propose to call 'green extractivism', which comes as a handy analytical tool in today's 'emissions imperative'. Green extractivism arises as an innovative way in which capitalist production, re-production, consumption and accumulation unfolds.

By exploring green extractivism, further steps into the theoretical and empirical understanding of extractivism are made. First, in terms of tackling the differentiated processes in which extractivism unfolds as a function of nature appropriation and labour exploitation (variations of extractivism). Second, in terms of further understanding how accumulation is realized throughout the commodity circuit (from extraction to consumption) and what are the implications for the host country in terms of economic production and development. And third, it allows the tackling of 'invisible' or 'intangible' key resources (emission rights) that are actually expropriated from the rural poor and that undermines social reproduction and puts an additional burden on the working people, especially onto rural women. Overall, new patterns of resource grabbing, accumulation and legitimation strategies were identified and explored throughout this study. The resulting new dynamics regarding land, labour and nature were put forward to analyse social reproduction and rural livelihoods.