
[Connecting the Climate Crisis \(and the so-called ‘Solutions’\) to Historical Injustices and Oppressions](#)

It is undeniable that the burning of fossil fuels is the root cause of today’s climate chaos. Most oil, coal and gas companies have been based from the outset in European and North American countries, relying in historical colonial processes for accessing fossil fuel deposits elsewhere. These companies and their colonial powers are still driving the crisis. It was these countries’ colonization of land, labour and cultures that enabled a capitalist economy dependent on fossil fuels to thrive. The climate crisis thus evidences the webs of power and oppressions that have been woven since colonization, as the dependency on fossil fuels is based on the interconnections between colonialism, racism, patriarchy and class exploitation.

The UN’s International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has at last highlighted in its April 2022 report what grassroots movements have for decades been calling for: a stop to the burning of fossil fuels. Nevertheless, the world’s largest oil and gas companies are projected to spend over US 930 billion dollars on new fossil fuel developments in just 9 years. These companies include Shell (Netherlands/UK), Chevron (US), Eni (Italy), TotalEnergies (France) and ExxonMobil (US) as well as state-owned companies such as Russia’s Gazprom, Saudi Aramco, PetroChina and Norway’s Equinor. (1)

What’s more, the UN climate negotiations and their ‘solutions’, such as ‘nature-based solutions’ or REDD+, are allowing governments and companies (and conservation NGOs) from the global North to grab and control yet more communities’ territories and forests in the global South. (2) The ‘renewable’ or ‘green’ economy is thus based on the same webs of power and oppressions that have given rise to the climate crisis.

Several articles in this Bulletin address these issues. One article alerts readers to the severe impacts that the on-going construction of large-scale dams along south-east Asia’s Mekong River is posing to communities and to all the interconnected lives this river sustains. Another exposes how the planned expansion of industrial oil palm plantations in the Brazilian Amazon, in particular by Brazil Bio Fuels (BBF), threatens the forests, Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities still further. Another contribution from Ecuador documents not only the impacts on communities of the violence and injustice adopted by oil palm plantation companies but also community resistance.

Tree plantation companies nonetheless are trying to portray themselves as saviours of the climate crisis. The Declaration of the 15th World Forestry Congress, which gathered together most of the tree plantation and cellulose industries on May 2022, stated that these industries “offer major nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, hunger and poverty.” (3) These ‘solutions’, however, are based on expanding the same destructive model of a fossil-fuel-dependent capitalist economy and therefore focus primarily on how to continue rising corporate profits.

An exposé from Indonesia shows how tree plantation companies APP and APRIL continue to follow a model of violence, pollution and dispossession – despite their ‘green’ commitments and targets.

This pattern is also evidenced in an article from Brazil's north-east, where the on-going communities' resistance focuses on the serious impacts on their lives and territories from the operations of multinational pulp and paper company Suzano in that state of Bahia. Corporations and their financial allies are enclosing and designating more forests as Protected Areas so as to claim compensation and mitigation for the pollution they have created elsewhere. With the support from many international conservation NGOs and the UN, these Protected Areas are also often labelled as 'nature-based solutions,' which renders invisible the history of violence and racism already experienced by forest communities living in and around these areas. (4) Once again, this illustrates how the climate crisis relies on, exacerbates and perpetuates historical oppressions.

In India, the expansion of Protected Areas in the name of 'conservation' has been a blunt violation of Indigenous Peoples' and forest communities' rights. An article documenting this also exposes the close linkages between Protected Areas and the expansion of mining and large-scale deforestation.

Large scale concessions – whether for the fossil fuel industry itself or an industry dependent on fossil fuels, for a plantation company, a mega-dam or a project claiming to offset fossil fuels' pollution – invariably destroy communities, forests, water sources and all the interconnected relationships of life, knowledge and histories bound up in specific places. The violence exerted by concession owners in these places is especially high for women and girls, who are often harassed, abused and raped within the territories that are encroached upon.

Connecting the roots of the climate crisis to historical injustices and oppressions is not only an act of recognition; it is also a way of making visible that such injustices and oppressions still operate today and have even deepened in some places. Addressing climate chaos, therefore, requires addressing the unequal relationships of power upon which a fossil-fuel dependent capitalism is based.

As Miriam Samudio, a founding member of an agroecology cooperative in Misiones, Argentina, which reclaimed land from multinational plantation company Arauco, affirms in an interview in this Bulletin:

"I know that despite all the challenges we face on a daily basis, we are able to dream, and to believe that what seemed so impossible can be possible, if we all organize and fight together."

(1) Global Witness, ["IPCC clarion call puts spotlight on fossil fuel industry's hypocrisy"](#), 2022,

(2) See, for example, WRM, ["15 Years of REDD: A Mechanism Rotten at the Core"](#), 2022; and WRM Bulletin 255, ["Nature-based Solutions: Concealing a massive land robbery"](#), 2021.

(3) FAO, 15th World Forestry Congress, ["The Seoul Forest Declaration"](#), May 2022.

(4) WRM, ["Press release: Stop the Racist Conservation Model!"](#), May 2022.