# The Destructive Power of 'Energy'

'Energy' consumption is on the rise around the world – and this is not because health care centers in the Global South finally have access to electricity (or education centers, or produce processing centers for small farming communities in remote areas, for that matter). This increase in energy consumption is driven by large corporations, nowadays by the communication and information technology industry, which controls data storage centers. These centers not only store data from cell phones; they also store much more complex data from so-called 'innovative' technologies such as 'artificial intelligence'. (1)

While there is a lot of talk about 'the energy transition,' the increased consumption of 'renewable and clean energy' has not actually reduced fossil fuel extraction. 2024 was a record-breaking year in terms of CO2 emissions and global temperature rise, and the oil, coal and fossil gas industries have never been bigger. Indeed, they are booming. Around 96% of oil and gas companies are exploring new reserves, and 40% of coal companies are developing or extracting coal from new mines. Since 2022, these companies' shareholders have earned USD 111 billion in dividends – which is 158 times the amount promised at climate conferences to be channeled to countries that are most vulnerable to climate chaos. (2)

All of the major threats to forest-dependent communities are directly or indirectly linked to this 'energy model' – and to the worldviews and perspectives that underpin it. Many different kinds of projects, whether they are officially 'clean energy' projects or not, dispossess communities and peoples from their territories in their quest for energy resources.

These projects include tree plantations to produce 'energy' and to supposedly reduce excess CO2 from the air; the 'recolonization' of forest-dependent communities' territories by 'energy' companies from the global North in search of so-called 'carbon credits'; extraction from new oil and gas fields and coal mines; the promotion of soybean or oil palm monocultures to produce biofuels, including bio-jet fuel; a new wave of construction of large, so-called 'clean' hydropower plants, along with transmission lines and other distribution infrastructure to move that 'energy'; and, of course, the frantic race for minerals – most of which are found in forest areas – that are essential for the 'energy transition.' (3)

While European environmental organizations celebrate modest advances – such as the European Union's recently passed anti-deforestation law – these wins become irrelevant in the face of the reality: that the world's largest corporations will do anything to keep their 'energy' model. They continue full speed ahead with a destructive and violent production system that requires increasingly more land and forests to produce more and more 'energy.'

In this scenario, it is necessary to support the resistance struggles of forest-dependent communities and grassroots organizations. But there is also a pressing need to strengthen another form of resistance: the resistance to the concept of 'energy' itself. This form of resistance does not receive much visibility, as it is usually embodied by peoples and communities who are disconnected from big energy systems. Nonetheless, this kind of resistance provides a fundamental contribution to the

conversation around the climate crisis.

The peoples and communities who resist the concept of 'energy' as we know it are proposing more than alternative concepts, perspectives and experiences around what 'energy' is (if they use this word at all). What they propose is another way of being in the world. They propose a world that is very different from the relentlessly plugged in capitalist world; they propose a world that would, in fact, make it possible to overcome the climate chaos we are experiencing.

This bulletin's introductory article reflects on how one particular concept of 'energy' has been introduced into people's minds as the only possible way of thinking about this idea. According to this conception, the only way to live is with abundant 'energy.' As the article shows, this is precisely what has resulted in today's completely 'energy'- and oil-dependent society, and all the problems that come with this model – which we know all too well.

The other articles offer reflections on the issue from grassroots organizations and communities that resist this concept of 'energy.' Examples include reflections by members of the Ka'apor people from Brazil, members of the Sagulu people in Indonesia, and a resident of Rote Island in Indonesia – all sharing why they have refused to connect to the electric power supplied by an 'energy' company. An article from Panama reports on the Caisán community's experience with collective energy generation, after they successfully stopped the construction of hydroelectric projects on the community's main river. Another article reflects on the connection between agroecology and energy sovereignty, drawing from the experiences of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. And an article from India provides perspectives on what energy means to the Parahia people, who have been engaging in a historic struggle for autonomy and territorial defense in the Rajmahal Hills in Jharkhand.

Enjoy!

References:

(1) [MIT Technology Review, "Why do the climate promises of AI sound a lot like carbon offsets?"](#)

(2) [DW, "Who is funding fossil fuel expansion?](#)

(3) [Fern, "Critical Minerals"](#)