



Extractivism, resistance and alternatives in a globalized world

APAD International conference, Catholic University of Central Africa, May 27-29, 2026

Call for panels

Since its foundation in 1991, the Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development (APAD) has promoted in-depth qualitative and empirical research on the dynamics of social change and development policies driven by states or international institutions. Following the 2024 conference at the University of Liège, which was entitled “Through the lens of work: Capitalism, development and social change in the Global South”, APAD will focus on extractivism in its various forms for the 2026 edition.

The concept of extractivism was introduced by South-American researchers and activists to provide a critical analysis of the extraction of natural resources by mostly Northern-based actors, the different forms of resistance that have emerged in response, and the post-extractivist alternatives that could be implemented (Gudynas 2015, 2021; Syampa 2013). Historically, these extractive processes have their roots in (post)colonial development policies and the global expansion of capitalism, closely link to the industrial development of the Global North. Extractivism therefore refers to the creation of value through extraction processes such as mining, the oil industry, and industrial agriculture. As it leads to the depletion of resources, extractivism has a lasting impact on local livelihoods. This notion, initially used to describe processes on South America and Africa, has been extended to include extractive logics in Northern countries. The aim of this concept is thus to question the harmful effects of extractive projects on people, livelihoods, and the environment (Allain & Maillet 2021). As the extractive processes can take many forms depending on the historical trajectories and geographical areas, this conference invites contributions on extractivism and its effects based on empirical research carried in different contexts, with the aim of deconstructing what might appear as false assumptions.

Although extractivism has historically taken root in various locations, today it reflects the particular ways through which global capitalism structures production and reproduction (Ye, Van der Ploeg, Schneider & Shanin, 2020). It participates in what D. Harvey (2003, 2005) calls accumulation through dispossession, whereby capital comes to be centralized in the hands of a minority . Nevertheless, it is necessary to avoid simplistic and militant rhetorics, and to take a closer, more nuanced look at the complexity of the processes involved.



Today, the concept of extractivism is used to describe broader processes of predation, extraction and export that are not limited to the extraction of natural resources or North/South relations. In migration studies, for example, it has been used to explain the undervaluation of migrant women's work in healthcare (care extractivism), and the vulnerability and precariousness of their lives in both the Global North and the Global South (John & Wichterich, 2023; Wichterich 2020). The concept has also been used in critical race theory (racial extractivism) to analyze the racial construction of oil enclaves in Nigeria (Adunbi, 2025) or the recruitment of cheap migrant labor for transnational oil and gas mega-projects in Canada (Preston, 2017). Such studies emphasise the racial and gender-based violence, as well as the material and physical consequences caused by extractive processes and logics (Murrey & Mollett, 2023). They highlight how value is extracted from individuals and their bodies, effectively reducing them to human commodities in the process (Morris, 2019).

On an epistemic level, Grosfoguel (2019) argues that universities and other sites of scientific knowledge production have historically been characterised by epistemic and ontological extractivism – i.e. processes that disqualify and eradicate the underlying historical memory of this knowledge's production. Academia is riven with structural inequalities on a global scale, and an international division of scientific labour between the countries of the Global North – as the sites where scientific knowledge is theorized, validated, and taught – and countries of the Global South – as places where data are extracted and theories applied (Deridder *et al.*, 2022). Thus, extractivism can be used as an exploratory concept for empirically studying the appropriation processes of nature, labour, knowledge, and culture between various centres and peripheries on a global, regional or local scale.

The aim of this conference is to examine the concept of extractivism in a variety of sectors and ethnographic contexts.. Participants are invited to question a) how extraction, or predation, is embedded in various social relationships (market, gift, sharing, solidarity, etc.), and b) to reflect on the varied scalar dynamics involved in these processes, not only between the Global North and Global South, but also within the Global South, between between urban and rural areas, and so on. The aim is to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of extractivism as an analytical entry point for studying transcalar dynamics in the 21st century.

Extractivism is therefore understood here as a broad concept, inviting us to consider processes and life experiences that occur at different scales. The aim is to establish connections between these multi-scale extractive dynamics and their local manifestation in particular human experiences. It means to shed light on the agency of people in the Global South (Pereira & Dzodzi Tsikata, 2021; Rubbers 2013), the interdependence of globalized political economies, and the key role played by extracted



resources in this global architecture. It also invites to pay closer attention to the protest movements that have emerged in various contexts against different forms of extractivism, including epistemic extractivism in academia. Finally, it calls for the exploration of alternative practices to classic extractive relations that emphasize sharing and restitution, and the promotion of the commons.

In the tradition of APAD, this call for panels and papers aims to investigate current manifestations of extractivism by examining local case studies based on solid empirical research. Panels and papers may address environmental, social, migratory, economic, political, or epistemological issues, and may focus on various categories of actors, including local communities, non-governmental organizations, state administrations, trade unions or international organizations. Panels and papers may also take different economic sectors as case studies, such as finance, agriculture, forestry, mining, tourism, real estate, health, science.... Particular attention will be paid to relations of power and domination at work, such as class, race and gender relations, as well as to the agency of people in the Global South (Táiwò, 2022). Finally, we invite panels and papers to draw comparisons between different contexts and social dynamics in the Global South and/or Global North.

The conference will be organized in the form of panels and papers. These can be structured around the following axes:

#1: Territories of extractivism, power relations and collective action

This first axis aims to raise new questions about the meaning of the notion of extractivism and its extension to new fields. The term is being used increasingly to study tourism (Loperena 2017), major infrastructure projects, urban real estate developments (Viale, 2017), land grabbing (Caouette 2016), and the appropriation of endogenous knowledge in science (Hardy & al. 2023). The aim is to map the actors involved in extractive processes by examining their profiles, *modus operandi* and the relations between them. The aim is also to develop a better understanding of the resources they mobilise, their logics, the places they invest, their claims, and the impacts of their actions.

In terms of endogenous knowledge, it is important to consider what happens when it falls into the hands of social experts (NGOs, INGOs) and social scientists. Panel proposals on epistemic, ontological (Grosfoguel, 2019) or even cognitive extractivism (Betasamosake Simpson, 2013; Langlois & Magaña Canul, 2023) are therefore welcome. Pestre (2015) and Schaeffer (2022) show how “indigenous” knowledge is extracted as raw material and transformed within Western science, thereby erasing the contribution of the “natives” from narratives and memories. Boumédiène (2016) illustrates, for instance, “how European colonization in America appropriated knowledge of medicinal plants through a network of expeditions and surveys, prohibition and trade, but also the complexity of the



transformative power of plants” (Hardy & al. 2023). Particular attention will be paid to how various communities and social groups organize to resist the onslaught of capital. Further research is required into the individuals and organisations that support and empower these communities, providing them with resources to build advocacy, as well as into the groups of young people, women and professionals who engage in collective actions. How do such groups learn to build solidarity in the face of the risks and challenges of dispossession?

The concept of extractivism can also be used to analyse the formation of class, gender, ethnic and racial division in labour relations. For instance migrants are often recruited as cheap labour in various sectors such as the oil industry, healthcare, or construction (Preston 2017; Morris 2019 & 2020; Wichterich 2020; Amougou & al. 2022). How, then, are hierarchies organized in these sectors, and how are they (re)negotiated, contested, and reworked locally? What does it mean to be a team leader? What role does the labor code play? Finally, we invite participants to adopt a comparative approach to extractivism that considers the interwoven nature of social and political processes occurring at different scales (Allain & Maillet 2021),), as well as the resulting subjectivation experiences (Amougou 2023).

2: Access to resources, predation and global dynamics

This second avenue for reflection examines how extractivism fuels a global economy in which the question of origins is dissolved. Here, the Global North is viewed as a metaphor for a capitalist impulse, and an ethos of consumption, that can be found wherever neoliberalism dominates or tends to dominate. Ye & al (2020) therefore argue that extractivism does not just take place in scattered or specific locations. Since it encompasses extraction sites, finance, trade, and services, among other things, it is central to the organisation of global capitalism itself. As Chagnon *et al.* (2022) point out, extractivism can also be used as an overarching concept that characterises capital accumulation processes and how they organise human and non-human life on a global scale. This approach requires a more sensitive approach to the fracturing and fissuring logics that are leading humanity towards global exhaustion and depletion (Mbembe 2020).

3 The place of other living species

Predation affects human bodies, other living beings and intangible resources (Mbembe 2023; Sarr & Savoy 2018; Ziff & Rao 1997). Themes such as the Anthropocene and the ecological crisis invite us to explore how the environment, other species, and objects become involved in the politics of extraction. More generally, this third axis calls reflection on political, social and epistemological initiatives that



advocate for a new planetary consciousness and the rebuilding of a human community in solidarity with all living beings. The aim is to question the artificial-becoming of humanity, whereby humans continuously invest themselves in matter, forms and objects (Mbembe 2023). **#4 Competing initiatives to extractivism? Between possible ways out of emerging extractivism and the promotion of alternative development models**

The conference welcomes research dealing with initiatives that explore ways of moving beyond extractivism. Such initiatives advocate degrowth and an ecological, political and social transition, as well as new economic practices that allow the preservation of nature (Langlois & Magaña Canul 2023). Other initiatives explore new approaches based on the co-creation of knowledge when implementing development projects (Olivier de Sardan, 2021), on participatory ethnographies, on ethics in the treatment of intangible heritage (Young James & Brunk Conrad 2009). Other initiatives seek for new ways of viewing the relationships between humans and non-humans (Escobar 2018), and of modelling the architecture of the world (Mbembe 2020).

5: Extractivism through an ethnographic lens

This last avenue for reflection and debate aims to subject the concept of extractivism to various ethnographic fieldworks. To do so, participants are invited to think extraction or predation in relation to other forms of relationships, such as restitution, sharing, solidarity and the market. This will allow more room for ambiguity and complexity. To move beyond an exclusive focus on interactions between the Global North and the Global South, participants are also encouraged to consider the various scales at which extraction takes place.

The organizing committee welcomes thematic panel proposals on the theme of the conference. In addition to panels devoted to the theme of the conference, a few panels may be dedicated to themes that fall within the scope of APAD. Panels will consist of 4 papers. Depending on the number of papers selected, convenors will have the opportunity to organise a double panel. After the conference, participants will be invited to submit their papers for publication in a special issue of *Anthropology & development*, the bilingual peer-reviewed journal of APAD.



Calendar

Participants are invited to submit a panel proposal (including a call for papers) of maximum 600 words. The proposal should include the full names, e-mail, affiliations, and institutional positions of the panel convenors. It may include a short bibliography. Proposals should be sent by e-mail no later than **15 July 2025** to the organizing committee at colloqueapad2026@gmail.com. Proposers will be informed of the selection results on 15 September 2025. The call for papers for the various panels will be launched by the panel convenors with a deadline for submitting paper proposals on **16 November 2025**. The panel convenors will select the abstracts and propose a full panel program to the organizing committee by 1 December 2025. The final list of accepted panels and papers will be published on 15 December 2025.

Practical information

A webpage dedicated to the conference will soon be available on the APAD website: <http://apad-association.org>

The working languages for the conference are French and English.

The conference will take place in Yaoundé from 27 to 29 May 2026, at the Catholic University of Central Africa (UCAC). A list of hotels at preferential rates for the conference will be posted in advance for room reservations.

Conference registration fees will be announced shortly. These will cover coffee breaks, lunches at the university cafeteria, the opening cocktail and the APAD membership for 2026.

A limited number of grants will be available to support young researchers and doctoral candidates who are struggling to fund their travel to and participation in the conference. The scholarship application process will open in January 2026. Only participants who have had a paper proposal accepted will be allowed to apply for a scholarship. They will also be asked to provide their full paper to panel convenors in advance of the conference.

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