Empowering Youth through Environmental Storytelling

Green Extractivism
in the Renewable Energy Transition

A man enters one of the tunnels dug with shovels in the Shinkolobwe Cobalt mine in South Eastern, Democratic Republic of Congo, April 10, 2004. (AP Photo/Schalk van Zuydam, File)

Some principles for a just energy transition

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TEHRA
The Environment and Human Rights Academy

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The purpose of these educational materials is to help young people understand the climate crisis on a systems level through engaging with the topics and foster agency through the skills and techniques of journalism.

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Learning objectives

1. Learn about the social and ecological consequences of the current renewable energy transition through the lens of extractivism
2. Increase awareness of how colonial histories and global inequalities impact the renewable energy transition today
3. Explore real-world examples where extractivist projects harm people and ecosystems
4. Consider principles needed for a just energy transition

✅ GreenComp alignment:

- Futures literacy
- Political agency
- Systems thinking

Unit guide

We recommend you begin with the opening activity, to have students explore the different values of stakeholders associated with mining for minerals such as lithium.

Read through the project instructions prior to going through the Learn texts together, so students get a feel for the task they'll have.

Discussing values

Watch (3.5 mins) and discuss (10 mins)

In this video report from ABC Australia titled "Rio Tinto's lithium supermine divides Serbia, with accusations of Russian meddling" we hear from at least four different points of view.

1. Zlatko Kokanovic, a resident in the Jadar Valley, whose property sits on top of the proposed lithium mine, says: "I don't have any intention of selling my property. I live here with my family, I have made my business here, **this land is sacred to me.**"

2. Chad Blewit from Rio Tinto says that the mine would be: "...**pretty valuable for the people of Loznica, the people of Serbia and Rio Tinto**."

3. Ecologist Ljiljana Tomovic from the University of Belgrade says "According to our studies ... **You can't have both the mine and biodiversity**, habitats, and the landscapes that we have. It's impossible."

4. The Minister for Mining and Energy says: **"It's an economic opportunity, a geo-strategic opportunity, a political opportunity** and it's really unique in that context."

Individually or in pairs, and then as a class, **discuss what the main values are of each of the points of view above** (the values that they're speaking to in regards to the proposed lithium mine). E.g. economic gain, community ties, spiritual connection with the environment, valuing nature for its own sake, etc.

Optional follow-on activity (30 mins +)

Split the class randomly in two (for and against groups) and debate the following statement:

This lithium mine, which could help provide 1 million electric vehicle batteries, is more important (in this context) than the biodiversity and opinions of the local communities and people of Serbia.

Take 10 minutes to come up with your arguments in your group, and then another 15 minutes to have the debate.

If you like, you can then swap groups and have them argue for the other side.

Communicating your opinion

Case study: Community resistance to the Barroso Lithium Mine in Portugal

Portugal, rich in lithium reserves, has become one of the focal points in Europe's strategy to secure critical minerals. Projects like the Barroso Lithium Project in Northern Portugal aim to supply the EU's growing demand for battery-grade lithium.

However, these initiatives have faced strong opposition from local communities and environmental groups concerned about ecological degradation and social impacts.

Background

Covas do Barroso is a small village in northern Portugal's Boticas municipality, renowned for its traditional agriculture and rich biodiversity. In 2018, the region was designated as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), recognizing its unique farming practices and cultural landscape.

In 2016, British mining company Savannah Resources proposed the Barroso Lithium Project, aiming to develop four open-pit mines over 542 hectares to extract spodumene, a lithium-bearing mineral. The project was projected to supply enough lithium for approximately 500,000 electric vehicle batteries annually, over a 14-year period.

Community opposition

Local residents, concerned about the potential environmental and social impacts, organised under the group "Unidos em Defesa de Covas do Barroso" (*United in Defense of Covas do Barroso*). Their concerns included:

- Environmental degradation: Fears that mining operations would lead to habitat destruction, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity, including threats to species like the Iberian wolf and freshwater pearl mussels.
- Cultural and agricultural impact: The mine's location on common lands used for traditional farming practices raised concerns about the disruption of centuries-old agricultural systems.
- Legal and ethical issues: There are allegations that Savannah Resources encroached on communal lands without proper consent, leading to legal actions by the community.

Government and legal developments

Despite local opposition, the Portuguese Environment Agency granted conditional approval for the project in May 2023. However, in February 2024, Portuguese prosecutors sought to annul the environmental permit, citing legal violations and inadequate environmental risk assessments. The controversy surrounding the mine contributed to a broader political scandal, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister António Costa in November 2023.

Current status

As of May 2025, Savannah Resources has secured temporary land access for fieldwork and drilling but faces ongoing legal challenges and community resistance. The company plans to commence production by 2027, but the project's future remains uncertain due to the sustained opposition. However, the recent listing of this project among the 47 strategic projects of the European Union points towards the political pressure coming from the high lithium demand, questioning if community opposition will be enough to halt the project.

Your task: Write a letter to the European Commission

On March 25th 2025, the European Commission "adopted, for the first time, a list of 47 strategic projects to increase national capacities for strategic raw materials."

Out of these, four are located in Portugal: three for lithium and one for copper. Despite community resistance against the Barroso Lithium Project, the mining project has still been listed.

For a just energy transition, it is crucial to uphold democracy and people's rights to make decisions about topics that directly impact their livelihoods. Your task is to draft a letter expressing your opinion on this issue.

Demonstrators shout slogans during a protest demanding the end of fossil fuels by 2030, in Lisbon, Portugal, Saturday, Nov. 22, 2025. (AP Photo/Armando Franca)

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Students should form groups of 3-4 and take 30 minutes to draft a letter in which they:

1. Summarise what they learned about the Covas do Barroso case (based on the above and extra research).
2. Present their opinion on whether this lithium mining project should go forward.
3. Support their stance with evidence from the case study and broader environmental considerations.
4. A representative from each of the group's shares with the rest of the students, who should provide feedback to the letter.

This activity aims to foster critical thinking, empathy, and active citizenship by encouraging students to analyse real-world environmental issues and articulate informed opinions.

Note: This activity can also be set as homework, in which case the following format is suggested (in groups, or individual):

Research phase:

- Review the case study above and additional resources on the Barroso Lithium Project.
- Understand the perspectives of various stakeholders, including local communities, environmental groups, the mining company, and government agencies.

Discussion questions:

- What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of the Barroso Lithium Project?
- How do local communities perceive the impact of such mining projects?
- What alternatives exist to balance economic interests with environmental protection?

Letter writing:

- Compose a letter addressed to either the President of Portugal or a representative of the European Commission.
- In your letter, express your informed opinion on the proposed lithium mining project in Covas do Barroso.

Bring your letter to class, and share it with your peers.

The case study of the Barroso Lithium Mine is not an isolated one. Many communities around the world are opposing lithium mining projects around the world. Barroso illustrates how extractivism can occur within Europe itself, not only in the Global South.

Tips

- Make your first sentence strong and concise: state your main point upfront.
- Then bring background in – the strong data and evidence that supports your point of view.
- Show, don't tell.

The renewable energy transition is essential to mitigate climate change - but if it relies on extractivist practices, it risks repeating similar injustices to the fossil fuel-based energy system. Understanding extractivism helps us work toward a just energy transition instead.

1. Why renewables are needed, and why they come with costs

Our societies must rapidly move away from fossil fuels to stay within the Paris Agreement's temperature limits.

This means replacing fossil-fueled energy systems with renewable energy.

Renewable energy is "energy derived from natural resources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed"[1]. Energy derived from sunlight or wind is renewable, because there is far more wind and sun than we can use.

Fossil fuels are the remains of plants, animals and microorganisms that have been subject to intense heat and pressure over millions of years, turning them eventually into coal, oil or natural gas.

Fossil fuels, by contrast to renewable energy sources, are finite and carbon-intensive.

Fossil fuel extraction comes with water pollution and land and ecosystem damage. Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide (CO_2), driving climate change, and pollutes the air. All these environmental issues have consequences on people's health and human rights, with marginalised communities bearing more of the resulting environmental damages.

However, renewable energy also comes with its social and ecological consequences. Every unit of energy requires materials, labour, and land, which means renewable energy can also cause harm if developed following unjust economic principles[2].

The key question for this unit is:

What happens when the shift to renewable energy reproduces the same extractivist patterns that caused harm in the fossil fuel era?

In our unit on Systemic Solutions to the Climate Crisis, you can find examples of communities deploying renewable energy projects that are less environmentally destructive and seek to address injustice. We highly recommend that you go over those examples following this unit.

Extractivism:
The large-scale removal of natural resources, usually for use outside of the country/region where it's being extracted

Critical mineral needs for clean energy technologies

	Copper	Cobalt	Nickel	Lithium	REEs	Chromium	Zinc	PGMs	Aluminium*
Solar PV	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Wind	●	○	◉	○	●	◉	●	○	◉
Hydro	◉	○	○	○	○	◉	◉	○	◉
CSP	◉	○	◉	○	○	●	◉	○	●
Bioenergy	●	○	○	○	○	○	◉	○	◉
Geothermal	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	○
Nuclear	◉	○	◉	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Electricity networks	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
EVs and battery storage	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●
Hydrogen	○	○	●	○	◉	○	○	●	◉

Notes: Shading indicates the relative importance of minerals for a particular clean energy technology (● = high; ◉ = moderate; ○ = low), which are discussed in their respective sections in this chapter. CSP = concentrating solar power; PGM = platinum group metals.

* In this report, aluminium demand is assessed for electricity networks only and is not included in the aggregate demand projections.

Figure 1: Critical minerals required for each type of renewable energy technology. Chart from the International Energy Agency[3].

2. Extractivism in the renewable energy transition

2.1 Rising demand for critical minerals

Critical minerals are raw materials such as cobalt, nickel, copper and lithium and rare earth minerals[4].

These raw materials are referred to as 'critical' minerals because they are needed for advanced technology, including smartphones and laptops, as well as for wind turbines, solar panels and other green energy technology such as batteries for electric vehicles.

The renewable energy transition is driving a huge demand for critical minerals.

This urgency creates pressure to extract minerals quickly and at a large scale, often with limited environmental safeguards. Without careful governance, this can reproduce **extractivism** – a familiar pattern from fossil fuel industries.

2.2 What is extractivism?

Extractivism refers to the large-scale and/or intensive removal of natural resources, such as minerals, oil or timber, usually for export (so not for use by local communities), with minimal processing at the extraction site[5].

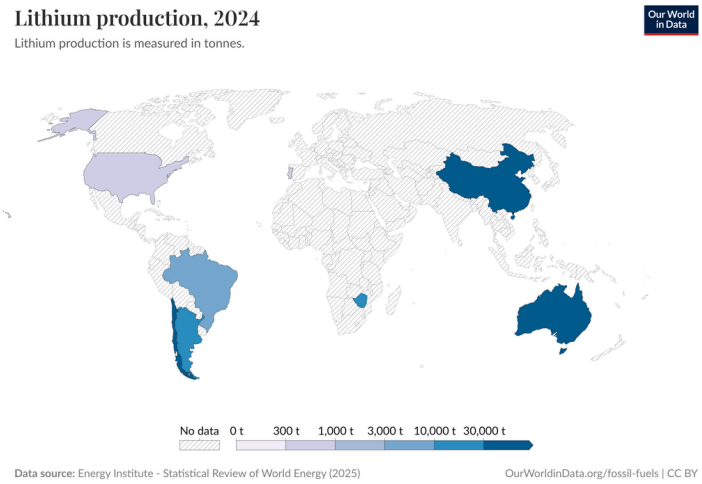
Extractivism is characterised by 3 main features:

1. large volumes of extraction
2. high environmental impacts
3. resources destined for sale in distant markets[6]

Because extractivism occurs when natural resources are taken (or extracted) at a very large scale, even some resources that we tend to consider as renewable (such as forests or soil fertility) are becoming non-renewable, as they do not have sufficient time and capacity to replenish[7].

Extractivism manifests through socially and ecologically destructive processes, as you will see in the case studies provided below. Communities who live nearby extraction sites end up bearing the environmental costs of the extraction, such as pollution and depletion of soil, noise and water, or are displaced from where they live, losing their traditional livelihoods.

At the same time, the local people who bear the costs are not the same as those who profit from the extraction of resources. The great majority of profits and benefits are felt elsewhere, swept up by powerful countries and corporations.



2.3 Extractivism and colonial legacies

The roots of extractivism today lie in colonialism. Across Africa, Asia and Latin America, European powers extracted resources and labour to fuel European wealth, while local communities faced slavery, dispossession, violence, and cultural loss.

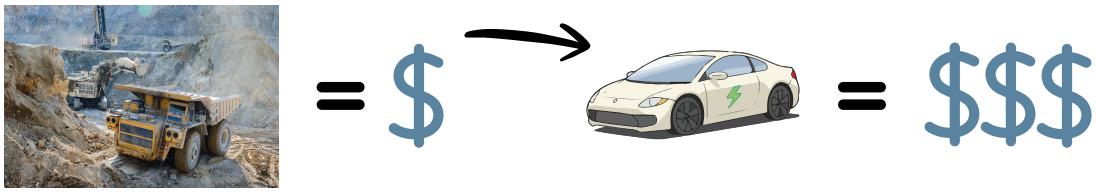
One well-known example is the silver mines of Potosí in present-day Bolivia. For centuries, silver from Potosí financed the Spanish Empire, extracted through forced Indigenous and African labour under brutal conditions. "You could build a silver bridge from Potosí to Madrid from what was mined here – and one back with the bones of those that died taking it out," says Gelano in his book *The Open Veins of Latin America*[8].

Unfortunately, these power structures did not end with colonialism in the 20th century – they continue to shape the global economy today through what is referred to as neocolonialism[9].

When extractivism occurs, one group of people bears the social and ecological costs, while another enjoys the benefits. Wealthy groups and countries consume far more resources than they provide:

- The richest 10% of people – primarily in the Global North – account for around 50% of global CO_2 emissions[10].
- The EU represents 6% of the global population but uses 25–30% of all metals produced[11].
- One study found that wealthy countries use 10 billion tonnes more raw materials each year than they produce while all other countries were net providers (producing more than they consume)[12].

This imbalance is enabled by an unequal global trading structure. Poorer countries typically export raw materials and low-value goods at low prices, while wealthier countries import those materials, process them with advanced technology and infrastructure, and export high-value products, such as electronics or machinery, at far higher prices.



2.4 Green extractivism and sacrifice zones

Today, a new form of extractivism is emerging: one framed as necessary for the renewable energy transition, but following the same patterns, while being presented as 'green'.

Green extractivism occurs when resource extraction is justified in the name of sustainability or climate action, but still follows extractivist logics: extracting large volumes of materials mainly for export to distant countries, degrading ecosystems, and harming communities.

Many mining companies claim to practice 'sustainable mining', but mining itself cannot be sustainable in the full sense of the term. We do need mining for raw materials, but we should be asking crucial questions:

- How much mining is truly necessary?
- Who benefits from mining?
- Who bears the costs?

Extractivism is a systemic issue, and is tied in with colonial histories, geopolitics and our current economic system[13]. This is why we need to think about changing the system that has got us into this socio-ecological crisis instead of expecting that the same system will get us out of it.

When extraction proceeds despite severe harm to the environment and local communities, the affected areas become sacrifice zones.

Cartoon by Betje Ton

Sacrifice zones are regions heavily exploited by extractive industries, where pollution and environmental degradation have inflicted irreversible harm on ecosystems and erased the livelihoods of those who call these places home.

These places are treated as expendable for a supposedly higher economic or strategic purpose. Governments and corporations often justify the social and environmental damage as unavoidable, presenting it as a necessary trade-off for national development, energy security, economic growth, or even the green transition.

Most often sacrifice zones are located on indigenous and peasant lands, and are home to low-income, ethnic or racial minorities who have less political and economic power to resist such projects. These patterns echo colonial structural inequalities[14].

This dynamic is visible in both fossil fuel extraction and in new projects linked to the renewable energy transition. In both cases, raw materials are extracted for global markets, processed or sold elsewhere for profit, while the environmental and health burdens remain with local communities.

The following case studies illustrate how both fossil fuel and 'green' industries create sacrifice zones.

Case study 1: the Niger Delta – a fossil fuel sacrifice zone

The Niger Delta is one of the most polluted places in the world due to decades of oil extraction. Oil spills, toxic waste discharge and gas flaring have destroyed habitats, contaminated water leading to fish populations plundering, and rendered the soil infertile.

Oil began to be extracted in the Bayelsa state in the Nigerian Delta in 1956. Since then, environmental catastrophes have been occurring across the Delta with an estimated 40 million liters of oil spilled every year[15].

In the state of Bayelsa live 2 million people out of which three quarters depend on fishing or farming to survive. Many water sources are polluted, leaving people without safe drinking water[16]. Gas flaring pollutes the air and triggers acid rain, contributing to severe health problems. The soil is contaminated with heavy metals such as chromium, lead and mercury, crops fail to grow and communities are often forced to eat fish that smells like oil.

A woman scoops oil from a spill in the Niger Delta in village of Ogboinbiri, Nigeria, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024. (AP Photo/Sunday Alamba)

"The fish we eat right now smell of crude in their intestines, smell of crude in their gills. And most times, we eat them because we have no option" says an Omodi community member[17].

The health consequences of soil, water and air pollution are visible in the local communities.

"Life expectancy is cut short – as low as 45. We used to have a very old population but, right now, that's not as visible as it used to be," says Eradiri from the Bayelsa state. "You see premature babies, you see all kinds of funny illnesses, cancer, that [are] not normal for young people."

A study found that only in 2012, 16,000 babies died as a consequence of oil pollution[18].

Despite this devastation, oil companies often fail to clean spills or compensate affected communities. The region is effectively sacrificed so that oil companies' profits - enjoyed elsewhere - can continue.

Can you imagine this happening to a wealthy community in the Global North?

If you want to hear from community members about these issues, you can take this Virtual Tour of the Nigerian Delta where people speak about how they live.

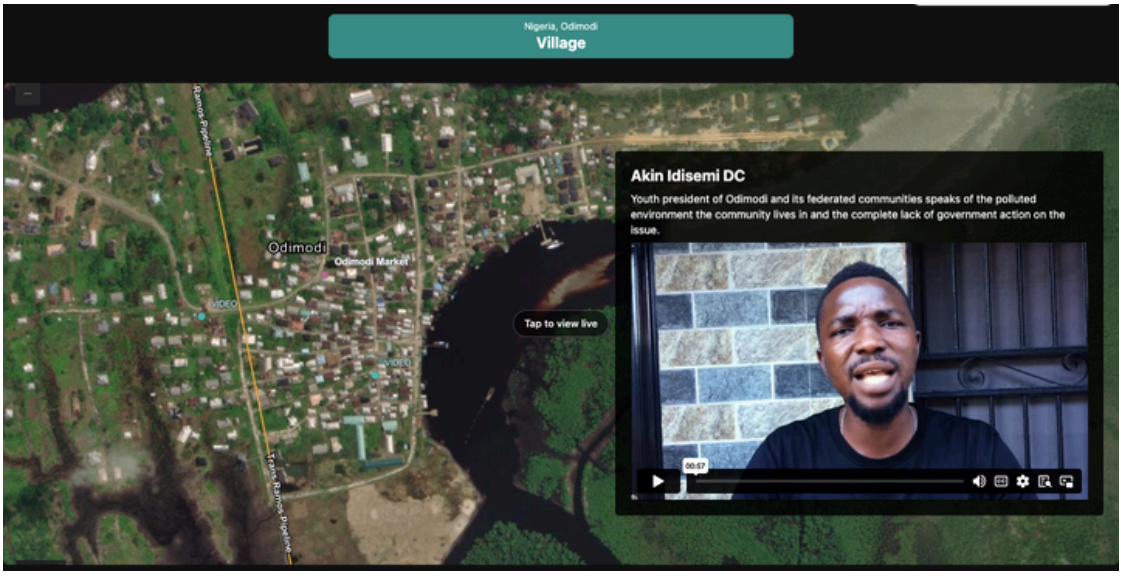


Photo: A man enters one of the tunnels dug with shovels in the Shinkolobwe Cobalt mine, 35km from the town of Likasi, in South Eastern, Democratic Republic of Congo, April 10, 2004. Eastern Congo has been beset by conflict for years, with M23 one of more than 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in the mineral-rich area near the border with Rwanda (AP Photo/Schalk van Zuydam, File)

Case study 2: The Democratic Republic of Congo - a green sacrifice zone

The Democratic Republic of Congo holds more than half of the world's cobalt reserves and accounts for 70% of global production[19]. Cobalt is a mineral essential to preventing battery overheating and extending battery life.

As demand has surged, mining has expanded across the country, causing:

- Deforestation of the Congo Basin rainforest, a huge carbon sink: millions of trees have been cut down
- Toxic pollution of rivers, lakes, soil and air
- Loss of livelihoods for communities dependent on nature: "In this stream, the fish vanished long ago, killed by acids and waste from the mines," says a local resident, Heritier Maloba[20].
- Severe health effects, including increased birth defects from toxic pollution
- Human rights abuses, including modern-day slavery, human trafficking, child labour and exploitation

In the name of the green energy transition, communities in the DRC face environmental degradation and social injustice - mirroring extractive patterns seen in fossil fuel projects[21].

3. The costs of hydropower

Hydropower is often labelled as a renewable energy source, yet the construction and operation of dams – large or small – can cause significant environmental and social harm.

Ecological impacts include:

- Disruption of river ecosystems
- Loss of habitats for fish, amphibians, and other species
- Fragmented habitats and altered flow regimes
- Reduced water availability downstream

Social impacts can include:

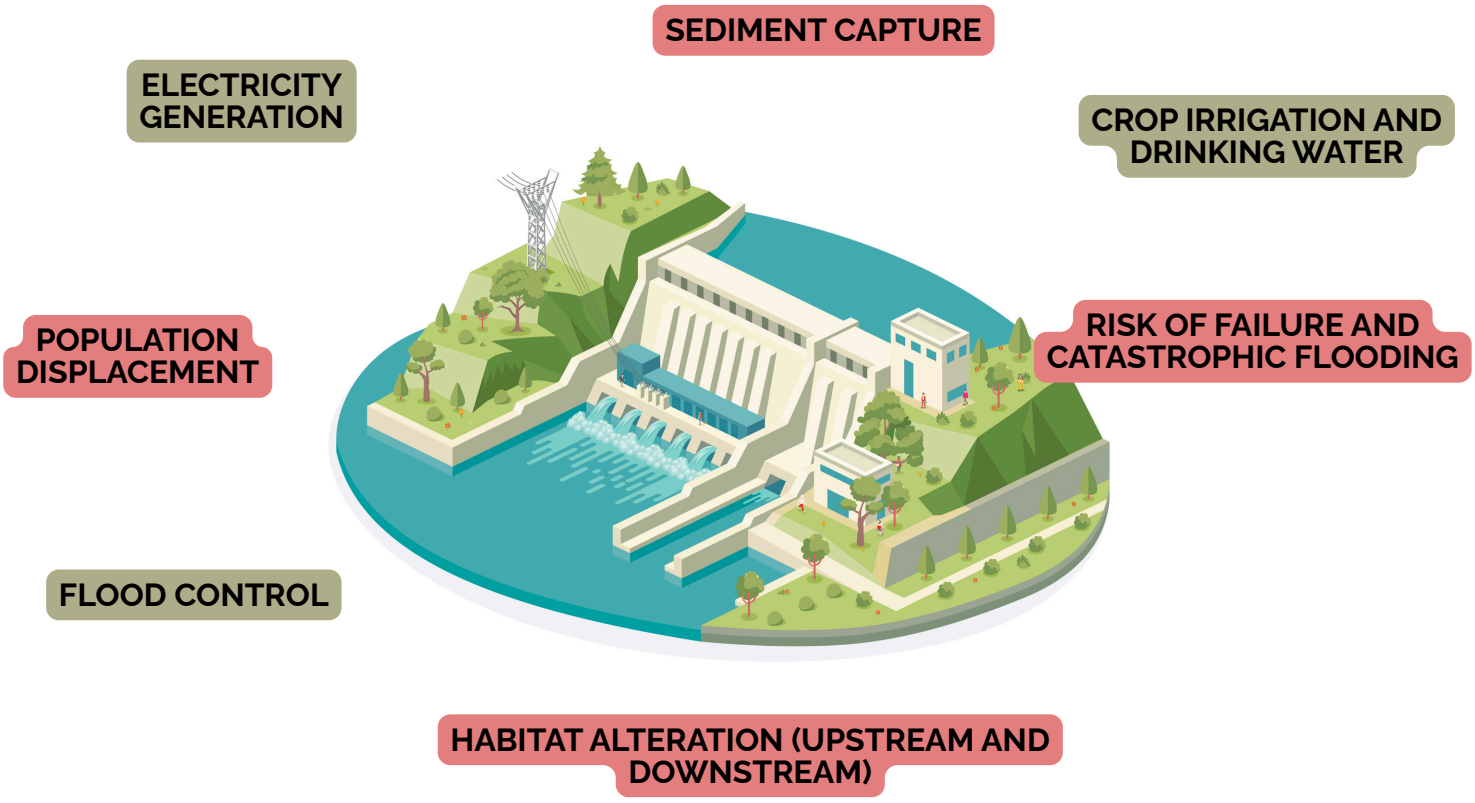
- Displacement of communities
- Loss of agricultural land
- Conflicts over water resources

In the figure below you can see the main costs and benefits of dams.

As we transition away from fossil fuels, it is essential to ask: *what kind of renewable energy system are we building, at what cost, who bears this cost and who reaps the benefit?*

Outlining the negative impacts of hydropower is not to say that dams are inherently bad. However, it is important to keep in mind that no energy production comes for free, and every unit of energy has social and ecological costs.

Before each project is done, an assessment of costs and benefits in terms of how people and nature are impacted should be incorporated into decision making. If decision-making centres human and nature well-being, the costs on people and our planet will be much lower than when energy projects prioritise profit.



An Indigenous spiritual leader performs a ritual song with ashes from the Amazon fires to pressure leaders to implement a just energy transition and to phase out fossil fuels, ahead of the country hosting the COP30 U.N. Climate Summit, in front of the Itamaraty Palace, in Brasilia, Brazil, Tuesday, April 15, 2025. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres)

4. Toward a just energy transition

4.1 Why justice matters

The climate justice movement has rightfully added the 'just' to 'energy transition'.

For instance, whilst African countries have contributed less than 4% to global CO2 emissions, the continent and its people are on the front lines of the climate crisis[22]. Moreover, about 600 million people in Africa lack access to electricity, which affects their access to healthcare, education, energy for farming and other types of work[23]. It is crucial that the renewable energy transition not only sees a phasing out of fossil fuel but also provides access to sufficient, reliable and affordable electricity to all people.

The emphasis on justice in 'just energy transition' seeks to fix these global inequalities of responsibility and impacts in relation to climate change and avoid perpetuating them[24].

The IPCC has also incorporated the aspect of justice in the energy transition: "The Just Transition framework refers to a set of principles, processes and practices aimed at ensuring that no people, workers, places, sectors, countries or regions are left behind in the move from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy"[25].

As you have seen above, extractive operations conducted in the name of renewable energy have had a negative impact on local communities as mining projects often violently displace communities, put pressure on water resources, destroy habitats and pollute rivers, soil and air with waste[26]. At the same time, the profits and benefits of renewable energy technology are felt elsewhere.

It is crucial to understand that these negative socio-environmental impacts are not unavoidable. These negative consequences are the result of many companies and governments involved in the renewable energy transition focusing on short-term profits whilst ignoring the negative impacts on local communities and the environment.

But we could address the climate crisis differently by working with nature, instead of against it, and making sure we meet all people's needs.

4.2 Working with nature: Ecosystem restoration and protection

When protected and restored in close partnership with or by local communities and Indigenous Peoples, natural forests, wetlands, savannahs, estuaries and other ecosystems can act as powerful carbon sinks, offer shelter to biodiversity, help replenish the water cycle and bring social benefits for local people[27].

Ecosystem restoration seeks to restore lands and waters to revive webs of life where animals, plants and human beings depend on each other and co-exist in harmony[28].

Ecosystem protection are the practices and policies that enable safeguarding of nature and ecological processes that sustain life on Earth.

Indigenous Peoples are groups sharing collective ancestral ties with the land and natural resources in areas where they have lived for thousands of years, living in close connection with their land and ecosystems. Whilst each group has its own worldview and belief system, Indigenous Peoples often see themselves as deeply interconnected with nature rather than separate from it. The environment provides them with resources for their subsistence, such as food, water, materials for clothes and shelter and medicines, but also represents a source of meaning and spirituality.

Because Indigenous Peoples derive their means of subsistence and meaning directly from nature, they are particularly vulnerable to the displacement and destruction of ecosystems associated with mining.

Moreover, because in defending their land and forests they are often opposing powerful economic and political interests, many have been threatened or killed for opposing the destruction of nature[29].

Aztec dancers perform during a sunrise gathering on Indigenous Peoples Day on Alcatraz Island on Monday, Oct. 13, 2025, in San Francisco. (AP Photo/Laure Andrillon)

Members of the Gadaba Indigenous communities gather tendu leaves to sell April 16, 2025, in Hatipakna village, India. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool, File)

Indigenous Peoples have developed the knowledge and practices to use resources carefully and preserve nature for the generations to come, with deep respect and gratitude. Although they represent only 6% of the global population, Indigenous Peoples conserve 80% of the world's biodiversity[30]. Indigenous Peoples are also climate pioneers, having developed a number of 'just energy transition' projects, sustainable forestry and climate change resilience projects that we can learn from to address climate change[31].

The modern western worldview perpetuates narratives where nature is seen as an exploitable resource to be used without limit – which is the very mindset that brought us to the climate crisis. Yet, there are other ways of relating to nature that communities like Indigenous Peoples adopt which can help us coexist in harmony with nature.

If we can learn from Indigenous Peoples, we have higher chances to not only create powerful natural carbon sinks, but also to improve people's physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as biodiversity.

4.3 What a just renewable energy system should look like

For a just energy transition, we will have to transform current energy systems.

The current fossil fuel-based energy system is designed to pursue economic growth at all costs. Energy is seen as any other commodity in the market, accessible only to those who can afford it, and resulting in huge profits for fossil fuel companies. At the same time, 760 million people lack access to electricity (in 2022)[32].

A just renewable energy system should not replicate the extractivist dynamics of the fossil fuel energy system which has produced the climate crisis in the first place[33].

DF - BRASILIA - 04/15/2025 - BRASILIA, INDIGENOUS PROTEST - An indigenous spiritual leader pours ashes from the Amazon fires to pressure leaders to implement a just energy transition and phase out fossil fuels, discussions that drive the COP30 debates, outside the Itamaraty Palace, in Brasilia, Brazil, Tuesday, April 15, 2025. Photo: Mateus Bonomi/AGIF (via AP)

A just renewable energy system should:

- Focus on meeting all people's needs
- Energy projects should first deliver energy to and benefit the local communities, before it is exported.
- Treat energy as a right and a common good rather than as a private commodity[34]. Everyone has the right to sufficient, reliable and affordable energy – to cook, stay warm, have light for study, work and recreation.
- Ensure local communities can meaningfully influence renewable energy or mining projects[35].
- Rare material resources must be carefully managed for the long-term rather than consumed in the short term.
- The mining of minerals must meet human rights obligations and strong, legally binding social and environmental standards[36].

The renewable energy transition is essential for addressing the climate crisis – but how we do it matters.

There is no single perfect approach for a just energy transition, but we can avoid repeating the injustices of the past by transforming the **goals** and **mindsets** that underpin today's extractivism and global inequalities, and the **laws** that perpetuate them.

If the transition relies on extractivist practices, it risks creating new sacrifice zones, deepening inequalities, and harming the very communities and ecosystems it seeks to protect.

A just energy transition requires:

- Understanding and opposing (green) extractivism
- Learning from past and present injustices to avoid repeating harmful practices
- Protecting nature and people
- Meeting communities' needs and involving them directly in decisions
- Ensuring that renewable energy truly serves the common good and benefits everyone

This is the challenge and the opportunity of building a fair, sustainable future, together.

Indigenous activists participate in a climate protest during the COP30 U.N. Climate Summit, Monday, Nov. 17, 2025, in Belem, Brazil. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)

Endnotes

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