

Feminist Africa 2020

Resistance to Extractivism and the Search for Alternatives

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International public and private sector players are currently exhibiting considerable predatory interest in Africa, viewing the continent as a source of vast natural resources as well as potential markets. This is happening at a time when deepening fractures and inequalities within African countries, increasing immiseration and soaring unemployment characterise living conditions across the continent. Growth without the furtherance of people's wellbeing is at the heart of so-called economic development. The economic models adopted by many African governments have been based on extractivism, or the predatory exploitation of all kinds of resources – bodies, labour, land, oil and mineral resources, water resources, food – in a bid to maximise profit. Extractivism goes beyond the extraction of oil and mineral resources as commodities; it is instead a characteristic of the deepening of capitalism in the context of neoliberal globalisation.

Extractivism was the theme of the Second Idea Laboratory of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group, held in Kampala from the 7th to the 9th of May 2018. The African Feminist Reflection and Action Group is a continental network of feminist scholars, activists, trade unionists, members of political parties who share an understanding of feminism as simultaneously an intellectual as well as a political project, one that is geared towards transformation in the direction of social and gender justice. Participants at the Kampala meeting came from Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda. Discussions drew attention to the narratives used to justify extractivist practice (e.g. modernisation, development, food security), the actors involved (transnational corporations, authoritarian states and their militarised 'security services') as well as the practices adopted (e.g. increasing corporatisation, land grabbing). The meeting highlighted differing ways in which the intensification of capitalism through extractivism reinforced patriarchal, racist, and other forms of fracturing of societies across Africa.

Members of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group agreed that it was essential to improve understanding of the processes of extractivism in Africa and to document resistance and related struggles as well as alternatives. In the wake of deepening extractivist ideology and practice concerning the full gamut of resources in Africa – particularly women's bodies and women's labour but also land, oil and mineral resources, water resources, food – the need for a strong counterforce is greater now than ever before. Building such a counterforce necessarily involves the strengthening of feminist networking and the production and circulation of feminist knowledge in support of autonomous organising and feminist movement-building within Africa.

This issue of *Feminist Africa* presents some of the projects that were carried out in the wake of this networking and discussion, with support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The projects were aimed at supporting activities that would deepen understanding, stimulate

conversation and debate about the issues involved, and support action aimed at social transformation and the promotion of alternatives to an extractivist economic order.