

Contextualising Extractivism in Africa

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Abstract

This article contextualises the phenomenon of extractivism in Africa, exploring the extent to which the different meanings of extractivism in the literature contribute to an understanding of its gendered character. We argue that extractivism is embedded in the changing dynamics of contemporary capitalism and configured differently in diverse social formations, each with its particular history, state, class formation, political culture and practice, range of natural resources, and policies. Nevertheless, certain broad commonalities may be identified. We highlight four key themes that have been salient in the literature: 1) meanings and manifestations of extractivism; 2) the key actors involved; 3) responses and resistance; and 4) alternatives to extractivism expressed by feminist intellectuals and movements. The article points to the need for greater attention to African feminist analyses of context, women's resistance to extractivism, their propositions for anti-capitalist alternatives, and the possibilities of transforming our economies, our social relations, and our relations to the natural world.

Keywords: extractivism, resistance, alternatives, natural resources, actors, financialisation

Introduction

The extraction of ever-greater amounts of natural resources from the earth, propelled by commercial interests, is leading to increasingly exploitative and destructive activities in many regions (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011; WoMin, 2013; Ye *et al.*, 2020). Capitalism in the 21st century has been marked by a deepening of extractivism. Extractivism is defined as the accumulation of wealth through the extraction of a broad range of natural and human resources from colonies and ex-colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and the exportation of this wealth to the centres of global capital (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011; Ye *et al.*, 2020). While extractivism has been a longstanding feature of capitalism since the 19th

century, its current features are linked with the maturation of two processes within capitalism: economic globalisation¹ and the financialisation of capital². Economic globalisation and financialisation have meant that all economies in the world are integrated within a capitalist system created and dominated by activities and actors from the Global North. In this system, accumulation from economies dependent on primary commodities no longer relies on ownership and/or direct control over factories, plantations, mines, forests and labour. Instead, the operational centres of capital exercise *control over the flow* of extracted resources and services, and the *draining of value* to other places (Ye *et al.*, 2020).

Some commentators have pointed out that the extraction of surplus has always been an integral part of capitalism. Drawing on Marx's concept of primitive accumulation,³ and Rosa Luxemburg's (1913/2003) expansion of its scope to the spread of capitalism into new territories, David Harvey (2003), for example, argues that the process of capital accumulation on a world scale is a continuing, rather than a transitory, process of "accumulation by dispossession". Dispossession underlines the use of force by market and state actors to gain private control over access to, and the use of, resources. Others have been concerned that the concept of extractivism is being substituted for capitalism. While this is certainly a feature in writings on extractivism which suggest that the intensification and expansion of extractivism is leading to systemic shifts in the nature of capitalism (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011), this is not a debate we take up in this article. Our interest is in exploring the extent to which the different meanings of extractivism in the literature contribute to an understanding of its gendered character. We therefore retain the conception of capitalism as an economic system of production and reproduction, at the same level of abstraction as feudalism and socialism. We also posit that economic globalisation, financialisation and extractivism are process mechanisms of capitalism.

Retaining the concept of extractivism has enabled us to explore certain features of capitalism that are being reinforced in economies dependent on primary commodities. It has also made possible a critical engagement with the literature on extractivism to uncover its different meanings in various contexts and in relation to different resources, both natural and human. Most importantly, it has facilitated a discussion of the economic models adopted by many African governments, which are characterised by a longstanding emphasis on accumulation via the extraction of

natural resources, predominantly for export. In much of Africa, which is currently the epicentre of extractivism, primary commodities account for over 60% of exports in 28 out of 38 African countries surveyed recently. In those countries that are dependent on primary commodities, the top two or three commodities comprise more than 80% of exports (UNCTAD, 2012, cited in UNDP, 2016). Volatility in commodity prices has generated considerable economic and political instability in addition to severe social hardship (UNDP, 2016).

The social, economic, and political dimensions of extractivism are evident in the deepening of inequalities within and among nations, the growing power of transnational corporations, and the erosion of sovereignty and decision-making power in national contexts. Complex changes in social relations of gender, class and ethnicity are unfolding as a consequence (Tsikata and Golah, 2010). While extractivism and its consequences are highly gendered, its treatment in the literature is generally gender blind (WoMin, 2013; 2015). This article, which is a feminist critique of extractivism and its manifestations in African contexts, addresses this gap in the literature. Our starting point is that extractivism is configured differently in diverse social formations, each with its history, state policies, class formations, political culture, and governance of natural resources. Nevertheless, certain broad commonalities in terms of coercive practice and consequences are clear: the appropriation of land in order to extract natural resources, the dislocation of communities, widening social and economic inequalities, the increasing use of violence to repress resistance, and the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity. Our analysis proceeds by posing the following questions: Who are the key actors? What have the responses been and how have women engaged in resistance to extractivism? What are the possibilities for the transformation of economies, social relations, and our relations to the natural world?

Meanings and Manifestations of Extractivism

To explore its meanings and manifestations, we examine three important factors that have shaped extractivism in various places—context specificities, the nature of the resource sector in question, and recent developments within capitalism, such as financialisation of capital and contemporary large-scale land grabs. The discussion highlights the gendered implications of these factors and related developments, and their implications for extractivism.

The Specificities of Contexts

In the influential literature on South and Central American contexts (e.g. Lang and Mokrani, 2011), extractivism is understood to refer to a mode of accumulation embedded in a long history of colonialism and exploitation of the Americas, Africa and Asia, which involves the extraction and production of raw materials—primary commodities—from erstwhile colonies to satisfy demand from the metropolitan centres (Acosta, 2011). The resources involved are not only minerals or oil; they include those extracted from agriculture, forestry, and fishing.

Alberto Acosta argues that extractivism “has appeared in different guises over time” (2011, p. 63). Even those South American countries that aim to break away from the neoliberal model— Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela—have found themselves relying on extractivism in a new guise, referred to as neo-extractivism. This involves governments attempting to use the proceeds from extractivist activities to promote national development, primarily through social welfare policies and poverty reduction (Gudynas, 2010: 13). In spite of the commitment to national development and welfare policies, however, this neo-extractivism barely differs in its consequences from predatory extractivism, which has no pretensions about implementing a transformative agenda (Acosta, 2011). Just as predatory as extractivist economies, neo-extractivist economies have experienced rising unemployment and the continuing destruction of communities and the environment, with the ensuing social and political unrest being met with violence and suppression by the state’s coercive apparatus (Lander, 2011; Riofrancos, 2019).

In Africa, the North African region has geostrategic importance given its closeness to Europe, its mining and oil industries, and the richness of its soil. Three countries—Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco—are particularly notable here. Algeria is the third largest supplier of gas to Europe, and both Algeria and Tunisia are involved in large-scale oil extraction. Precious ores are extracted in Morocco. Tunisia and Morocco are not only important sources of phosphates, which are used to make agricultural fertilisers, but they export large amounts of agricultural produce to Europe. Both countries engage in water-intensive agribusiness as well as tourism. The ecological crisis resulting from extractive activities in North Africa encompasses water scarcity, acute environmental degradation, loss of soil fertility and pollution as well as global warming effects such as desertification, recurrent heat waves, droughts, and rising sea levels. The serious tensions inherent

in extractivism in the sub-region have generated protests and resistance from those most affected by the multiple crises. They are the poor—small-scale farmers, near-landless rural workers, fisherfolk and the unemployed—who have lost livelihoods, suffered land degradation and environmental destruction, and had their health seriously undermined (Hamouchene, 2019).

In the former French colonies of West and Central Africa, extractivism is embedded in a very particular monetary arrangement, the CFA Franc currency arrangement. Ostensibly established to stabilise the currency in these former colonies on the eve of independence, the arrangement involves a fixed exchange rate for the CFA franc, free movement of capital between the African countries and France, the free convertibility of CFA (formerly into the French franc, and now the euro but no other currencies, nor even across the West and Central Africa CFA zones), and the centralisation of foreign exchange reserves. The fixed exchange rate means that exports from the African countries using the CFA franc are too expensive for most other countries yet remain cheap and convenient sources for continued extraction of natural resources by France. The central banks of each zone must pay a hefty portion of their foreign exchange reserves— 50% for the Central African zone⁴ and 60% for the West African zone⁵—into a special account at the French Treasury, known as the “operations account” (Fazi, 2019). These funds help subsidise the French national budget and French public debt, even as the African countries whose monies are thus used have no knowledge or control over the sums involved (Taylor, 2019).

No former colonial power has retained the intensity of political, economic, military and cultural subordination and control over its former colonies as has France. Access to natural resources and markets in Africa for French interests are guaranteed through these neo-colonial relations and through highly personalised networks with local elites who benefit personally and are complicit in maintaining this exploitation. France’s former colonies are critical for French economic concerns: nuclear power accounts for 80% of French electricity production and therefore uranium, sourced from Niger, is crucial. Moreover, the French aeronautics and weapon industries are particularly dependent on West and Central African countries for imports of manganese, chromium, and phosphates (Taylor, 2019).

The shifting significance of different sub-regions of the continent in terms of resource extraction is becoming more evident in recent times. The West African

sub-region has now become a major gold-mining zone with investment in exploration and exploitation activities increasing considerably since the mid-2000s. In the wake of the international financial crisis, gold prices multiplied almost six times between the years 2000 and 2011, from \$316.6 per ounce to \$1,896.5 per ounce (Prause, 2016). In the early 20th century, South Africa was the predominant gold producer but from the early 1990s, its production levels began to decrease. The second largest gold producer in Africa is now Ghana; gold mining activities have also increased in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal (World Bank, 2012). It is not only high gold prices that have driven the mining boom in West Africa, but also the liberalisation of mining legislation. This has led to a new generation of mining codes designed deliberately to attract foreign investment in the mining sector, with the inclusion of tax breaks and low-revenue payments. The liberalisation of legislation has been facilitated in many cases by the World Bank (Campbell, 2010, cited in Prause, 2016).

Increasingly centralised control over natural resources has led to their ruthless exploitation in a range of contexts. Jingzhong Ye *et al.* (2020) reflect on contemporary expressions of extractivism, particularly in emerging economies such as the BRICS⁶ countries. The authors⁷ posit that extractivism may be viewed as “*a particular mode of resource-use*”⁸ (p. 158) which exploits the value in natural resources until this value is (nearly or actually) exhausted. The relationship between the processes of production and reproduction is structured such that natural resources are exploited without their material reproduction, leading to eventual depletion and degradation. Material reproduction is in any case not possible with resources such as oil but in the case of forestry, fishing and agriculture, the neglect of such reproduction has highly destructive consequences. The key features of extractivist systems today, Ye and colleagues (cited above) argue, include monopoly control by an operational centre over the resources to be extracted, close interlinkages between state and private capital groups, and the creation of infrastructure—roads, waterways and the like—to enable the removal for export of extracted resources. The wealth generated through the extractive processes is channelled away from the people closest to, and negatively affected by, the extractive activities, being accumulated in the operational centre and in participating capital groups. Thus, extractivism deepens the existing inequalities embedded in its dynamic in the first place.

Considering the rise of the BRICS countries and their relations to global

capitalism, the authors point out that these countries have elevated extractivism “towards a structural feature of the politico-economic system as a whole”, one which is now central to growing parts of global capitalism (Ye *et al.*, 2020: 156). This conception of extractivism goes beyond that of Acosta (2011) and Gudynas (2010), to propose that extractivism is now not solely about the capture of value through dispersed physically extractive activities (e.g. mining, oil extraction and certain kinds of agriculture) that are limited to the periphery. Instead, such relations may be extended to new locations and other sectors—finance, food processing, industrial production, trade, and service provision.

The gender-blind approach in much of the literature on extractivism is conceptually revealing. Ye *et al.* (2020), for example, specifically refer to reproduction in terms of the material reproduction of natural resources but not the relations of social reproduction. Yet social reproduction is central to an analysis of capitalist accumulation, as Marxist feminists have pointed out for decades. The exploitation of women’s bodies and women’s labour that is common to patriarchal relations and the class relations underlying capitalist accumulation permeates the plunder and conquest of colonies as well as the exploitation of nature (Mies, 1998). Feminist economists have not only highlighted the significance of the domestic realm within which most social reproduction takes place, but also the implications of mainstream partitioning of households and domestic spaces from the market, even as the market is dependent and intertwined with this realm.

Feminist scholars have also drawn attention to ways in which norms sustaining particular institutions, practices and relations—such as households, conjugal relations, divisions of labour and access to resources—are ordered on the basis of assumed heterosexuality, or heteronormativity. This is the expectation that the foregoing are *necessarily* based on traditional gender arrangements and monogamy. Heterosexuality, we should point out, is not solely about sexual expression. Instead, it concerns the interconnections between sexual life and non-sexual realms, as well as conceptions of sexuality and gender, which are institutionalised through law and the state as well as enacted in everyday social interaction (Jackson, 2006; Tamale, 2011; Pereira, 2014). Its implications for extractivism include not only gendered expectations of domesticity for women and household headship for men but also the varied manifestations of sexual exploitation and sexual violence that women often face in conditions of diminishing

livelihood options, conflict and/or displacement. This is particularly significant in mining contexts (WoMin, 2013).

Resource Sector Specificities

The commonalities and interdependencies between different resource sectors – agricultural resources compared to fuels, for example – as well as their specificities have varied implications. In their comparison of large-scale agricultural and traditional extractives, Le Billon and Sommerville (2016) highlight the growing spatial overlaps between agricultural and traditional extractive projects, which sharpen tensions between the two. However, there are also distinct ownership, access, and utilisation patterns. In large-scale extractive sectors, these processes are more often within economic enclaves characterised by exclusion and restriction, and are more capital intensive, with limited areas to control, more complex infrastructure to utilise and markets that are harder to access (Li, 2014).

Within extractive sectors, however, there is also considerable variation. Forms of exclusion in the gold sector are often violent; artisanal mining is generally marginalised and, in some cases, criminalised and suppressed. Despite this, artisanal mining persists due to its significance for rural livelihoods, the wide availability of deposits, the ease of extraction, and access to markets. Men, women, and children are involved in artisanal mining (Hilson, 2002; Tschakert, 2009; Awumbila and Tsikata, 2010).

Traditional extractives (e.g. oil, gas, minerals) and extractive forms of agriculture, such as agribusiness, have been differentiated in their tendencies to displace or integrate rural communities. At the same time, the sectors often compete over access to valuable resources, particularly land and water. High technology and capital-intensive agriculture relies increasingly on extractive activities for nutrients and energy inputs while traditional extractive activities generally reduce the fertility of neighbouring agricultural land due to soil contamination, water degradation and the destruction of the ecosystem. Yet, ties between agricultural and traditional oil, gas and mineral extractive sectors have become even closer recently through their joint inclusion in financial instruments and the movement of capital accumulated in one sector for use in the other (Le Billon and Sommerville, 2016).

The persistent extraction of oil, gas and minerals is leaving devastating ecological and environmental damage in its wake. The consequences involve

multiple forms of degradation, including people's relationships to the land and their communities, the loss of biodiversity, and the depletion of important resources (Acosta, 2011). The displacement of peasant communities from their land affects all members in terms of loss of livelihood, wellbeing and belonging. However, not everyone is affected in the same way. It is peasant women who are predominantly responsible for domestic food production as well as the everyday care and reproduction of their households and communities.

Women's work situates them closest to polluted soils and waters, placing them at greater risk of ill-health [...]. But it is the women who labour on an unpaid basis to care for sick workers and family members, subsidising industries for poor living and working conditions, and releasing the state of its obligations to care for its citizens and hold mining companies accountable for their social and environmental impacts. (WoMin, 2013: 2)

The specificity of resources, and the capital and technological requirements of their exploitation, have implications for women's access to, and control of the land on which these resources are located. Demonstrating such a relationship requires fine-grained analysis. Awumbila and Tsikata's (2010) study on the gender segmentation of small-scale mining and mangrove harvesting shows that in small-scale mining, gender inequalities are reproduced by the new social identities formed by labour and land relations. In the mangrove area, however, contestations and conflicts arise out of the more formal tenure regimes resulting from increasing commercialisation. More studies of this sort are needed to deepen understanding of resource specificities and the gendered implications of extractivism.

Financialisation of Capital

The increasing prominence and power of the financial sector in the global economy, contemporary politics, and society have been hard to ignore since the 2007-2008 financial, food and fuel crisis. The dominant position of financial institutions and markets in the run-up to the crisis led many analysts to sharpen their perspectives on capitalism by referring to its growing financialisation. Defined broadly, financialisation is understood as "the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies" (Epstein, 2005: 3). Financialisation "signals a fundamental transformation of the dynamics of capitalist accumulation through a shift in the creation of value to a relatively autonomous and increasingly

dominant financial sphere” (Labban, 2010: 545). It is increasingly recognised that financialisation, which is not a homogenous process, is also shaped by national and local contexts, having spread across the world at different rates and through varied processes in specific locations and sectors (Karwowski *et al.*, 2018; Mader *et al.*, 2019).

The relationship between financialisation and extractivism has received less attention in the traditional extractives sector i.e. oil, gas and minerals, than in the agricultural sector. Karwowski’s study (2015, cited in Le Billon and Somerville, 2016) of the deepening of financial markets found that funds raised by mining corporations through the Johannesburg Stock Exchange were more often used for speculative than for productive purposes. Regarding the accumulative logic of finance, Labban (2010: 550) argues:

Finance allows investment in the future production of commodities as if those commodities have been already sold at a profit in the present, although there is no guarantee that those commodities will be sold at a profit or sold at all. [...] Financialization has permeated and transformed the nature of the production process – at the most fundamental level, the production of nature.

Given the hold that this financial logic has over the extractive industry, Labban (2010) argues that it is necessary to rethink notions of resource scarcity and crises. Rather than oil crises being about market shortages or scarcity in nature, they are now more fundamentally about *financial* dislocations, e.g. between futures and physical markets, or a decline in shareholder value and shortages of credit (*ibid.*). Shareholder pressure on parent companies, often located in the West, occurs regardless of the actual conditions of production, with negative effects on the financial position and sustainability of subsidiaries operating in the Global South.

With the increasing influence of finance in the economy, the socially constructed norms at work in this sector take on particular significance. Feminist research on financialisation highlights the masculinist ethos that pervades financial services and practices. Cynthia Enloe (2013) points out that *not* taking account of gender analysis risks assuming that women are “merely dependent bystanders, victims without agency” who “can be easily manipulated” (pp. 16–17). It also means considerably underestimating multiple sources of power, such as that wielded “by governments, by state officials, [...] by banking executives, by foreign

forces both during and after crises” (p. 17). Moreover, *not* taking feminist analysis of crashes and crises seriously can mean obscuring the workings and impact of diverse masculinities, rendering us “incurious about how male budget directors, male soldiers, male bankers imagine their own manliness, worry about expressing their manliness, and make choices based on their efforts to prove their manliness to their male rivals and male superiors” (p. 17). This has implications not only for the normalisation of masculinist organisational cultures but also for which economic issues are considered priorities and whose voices matter in their determination.

Recent Large-Scale Land Grabs

In the agricultural and food systems, financialisation is one of the most significant forces for change globally (Fairbairn *et al.*, 2014), affecting both land use and land property relations (Fairbairn, 2014). Since the 2000s, there has been an upsurge in land grabs⁹ across Africa (Batterbury and Ndi, 2018; GRAIN 2008, 2016). Many, but not all, of these land grabs have taken place for the purpose of financial speculation, which exacerbates the impact of extractivism.

There are continuities with historical periods of land grabbing elsewhere, such as the enclosure of the commons in England, and in colonial and postcolonial experiences and conditions (Borras and Franco, 2012; Batterbury and Ndi, 2018). Africa, for example, had experienced two earlier waves of large-scale land acquisitions since its partition among European powers between 1880 and 1914. The first wave included colonial-era acquisitions, particularly in the settler colonies, followed by the 1980s/90s land rushes for tourism, mining, and logging due to the neo-liberal turn from the 1980s. Yet, discontinuities with earlier historical experiences of land grabbing are evident in the political and economic context of contemporary market-driven large-scale land deals. These include the unprecedented size and speed of the acquisitions; the new players involved, in particular governments and companies from BRICS countries and the Arab world who joined the traditional European and North American investors; the fact that the acquisitions were driven by concerns about the volatility in food prices and food security; the search for alternative renewable energy sources; and the search for profits through land speculation. The influence of biofuel policies and the maturation of land market reforms of the early 1980s created favourable conditions for land grabbing. Without a doubt, the global financial, food and

energy crisis of 2007/2008 was the immediate trigger for the intensification of a trend (Doss *et al.*, 2014).

Although land grabbing is a global phenomenon, land in Africa is particularly sought after, being relatively free of the large-scale, industrialised agriculture and plantations that dominate other continents (Cotula *et al.*, 2009). In Central Africa, for example, large-scale investments in land have been a longstanding feature but since the 2000s, foreign investors have shown increasing interest in the sub-region. The recent land rush includes various efforts by transnational corporations not only to set up agro-industrial plantations for food, feed or biofuel, oil palm and rubber, but also to prospect for metals or fossil fuels buried under the forest—oil, iron ore and coal (Feintrenie, 2013). Rainforests in Central Africa are the second largest in the world, after the Amazon, with tremendous biodiversity (Malhi *et al.*, 2013); large areas of forest are set aside for conservation. At the same time, some of the largest reserves in the world of iron, cobalt, nickel, chrome, platinum as well as gold and diamonds are found in the sub-region—up to 85% platinum, 75% diamonds and 60% cobalt (Feintrenie, 2013).

With national governments negotiating concessions at an ever-increasing pace, prospecting and development projects in Central Africa have burgeoned as have land deals based on speculation over the increasing price of land (Deininger *et al.*, 2011). By the beginning of 2013, over 1.4 million hectares of land had already been acquired in five countries: Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and the Central African Republic. Most of the land acquired (over 660,000 hectares) was in Congo Brazzaville. Another 332,000 hectares, across the five countries, were under negotiation.

While some of the land transactions did not materialise, their disruptive effects such as increased land scarcity and conflicts have been highlighted in several studies. In general, local people's access to land is increasingly restricted and vast swathes of forest are under threat. Increasing demand on natural resources, from actors as varied as indigenous farmers and transnational corporations, has meant there is increasing competition for land. Conflicts over land are on the rise, particularly where there are overlaps between plantation or mining exploration permits and customary lands, and where logging concessions are given on permanent forests or protected areas (Feintrenie, 2013).

The dominant agenda of land and water grabbing today is agribusiness expansion and speculation. Offshore structures and illicit financial flows are key elements in this new wave of land grabs. For example, most of the companies involved in land deals in Mozambique are registered in Mauritius. Most farmland deals today are also deals about water. In Mali, Senegal and Cameroon, rights to water and access to water are explicitly guaranteed in the text of the legal agreements. Land deals are even being transacted in water conflict zones, such as along the Nile, upstream from water-dependent communities, and above non-renewable underground reserves, e.g. Sudan. Communities living next to these agribusiness operations will simply have no access to water in incidents of drought (GRAIN, 2016).

Whilst the governments, investors and development agencies involved in, or in support of, land grabs tend to argue that the land ventures will create jobs and produce food, these are not synonymous with land itself and the possibility of working on, or living off, the land. Under the new land ventures, smallholder farmers, especially women, workers and local communities will almost inevitably lose access to land for local food production (Oxfam, 2011). The new commercial opportunities tend to mean that certain categories of men assume greater control over the land, reducing women's access in the process. New sources of income from the land are also more likely to benefit men. Women are rarely involved in consultations with investors, partly because they are less likely than men to be custodians of land or landowners. Women's land rights are generally insecure and they face constraints and systemic discrimination in relation to their access to, ownership of and control of land. Although women in rural communities are generally involved in agriculture, men have effective control of the land and the income generated from it, even if this was derived from women's labour (Kachika, 2010; Tsikata and Yaro, 2014).

Several studies have found that the increasing drive to produce biofuels in the wake of the global financial, energy and food crises of 2007/2008 set up competition for land with food crops, lowering the availability of food and increasing prices. This affected women more than men, given women's gendered responsibility for feeding the family. Large-scale land deals ignore secondary uses of land – as sources of nuts, fruits, roots, medicinal and kitchen herbs, fodder, dyes, rope, timber, roofing and fencing materials – which are significant for women

(Kachika, 2010; Tsikata and Yaro, 2014). Underlining the critical importance of land to rural livelihoods, more recent studies have argued that for most rural societies, denial of access to land “literally means ruin. Livelihoods, homes and histories are effaced....” (Batterbury and Ndi, 2018: 579). The results are displacement, migration and, where possible, resettlement.

There are several old and new players in this current phase of extractivism. In the next section, we discuss certain key actors and their roles in advancing extractivist processes and outcomes.

Key Actors in Extractivism

Transnational Corporations, the BRICS, States and Local Elites

Internationally, a wide array of actors in the finance and food industries have turned to land as a new source of profit in the wake of the global financial crisis. These include private investors, such as “the investment houses that manage workers’ pensions, private equity funds looking for a fast turnover, hedge funds driven off the now collapsed derivatives market, grain traders seeking new strategies for growth” (GRAIN, 2008: 2). Through their roles in financialisation and land speculation, these actors contribute to the deepening of extractivism.

Corporations, transnational as well as national, are central actors in extractivism. In the field of seeds and agricultural chemicals globally, six major corporations, known as the “Big Six,” dominated sales in 2015—BASF, Bayer, Dow Chemical, DuPont, Monsanto, and Syngenta. Each of the Big Six had a distinctive profile, strongly marked by domination in the sale of either seeds and traits or chemicals (MacDonald, 2019). Plans for mergers and takeovers among these already large firms began in 2016. By the end of August 2017, Dow Chemical and DuPont had completed their \$130 billion planned merger to form DowDuPont, which subsequently split into three independent entities specialising in specific business sectors: agriculture, in the form of crop protection chemicals and seeds (Corteva AgriScience), materials science (Dow), and specialty chemical products (DuPont) (Reuters Staff, 2017; Tullo, 2019). In 2017, ChemChina finalised its \$43 billion takeover of Syngenta AG (Fukao, 2017), and in 2018, Bayer cleared the last major regulatory hurdle in its \$66 billion takeover of Monsanto (Bloomberg, 2018).

The implications of these mergers go beyond the official focus of business regulators on competition, market shares and concentration. The deeper issues

have to do with power and control over resources and the restructuring of the agricultural sector. A contraction in the number of providers of major agricultural inputs pushes farmers and food systems down a narrow technological path marked by dependence on proprietary seed, particularly genetically modified seeds, and agrochemical inputs. Highly processed, input-intensive staple crop varieties will be entrenched at the expense of traditional foods and biodiversity. Ultimately, food sovereignty and sustainable food systems are being seriously threatened by these mergers (ACB, 2017).

Major seed and agrochemical corporations do not operate in African countries in isolation. As Charmaine Pereira points out in this issue, such corporations work in concert with several other actors whose effectiveness is nevertheless dependent on the support of national governments. Small-scale farmers, notably women, are those particularly likely to be adversely affected by the threats above because of the specific ways they are inserted into global and national agro-food systems. Vandana Shiva (2016) shows how the deepening exploitation of land and seed through industrial agriculture has given rise to interlinked ecological as well as social crises, impoverishing farmers on formerly fertile land and culminating in conflicts portrayed as primarily identity-based—religious and ethnic—despite their prior material basis.

Transnational corporations are present in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco but the form of that presence varies. In the mining sector in both Morocco and Tunisia, national capital—private and public—dominates and transnational capital is minimal. In Algeria, the national oil and natural gas company, Sonatrach, is given majority ownership of all projects in the sector, by law. A contrary position prevails in Tunisia, where Shell holds an astonishing 100% interest in the most productive gas field in the country and, to add insult to injury, sells the gas back to the state at international market values in hard currency (Hamouchene, 2019). Tunisia, we should note, was the first country in which the widespread popular uprisings characterising the Arab Spring took hold in 2010; Algeria and Morocco followed suit in 2011.

BRICS corporations have been notably aggressive in the extractive sectors, where their response to falling commodity prices has been to intensify the volume of extraction in order to maintain profits (Bond, 2017). There are several noteworthy cases of such activities, which commentators have sharply criticised as looting and

corporate-driven underdevelopment (see Bond, 2017: 5). They include the Chinese Queensway Group's \$13 billion extraction of diamonds from Zimbabwe (which are unaccounted for) and the Indian firm Vedanta's purchase of the continent's largest copper mine from Zambia at a paltry one-twentieth of the amount of subsequent *annual* profits. Other egregious acts include the displacement of thousands of Mozambican villagers by Brazil's Vale mining house in its quest for coal, and South African cell phone giant MTN's tax dodging in several African countries, using Mauritius as a tax haven (Bond, *ibid.*).

Rather than playing a progressive role in stemming the extraction of resources and profits from African countries, the BRICS have instead been accused of actively contributing to Africa's underdevelopment. Bond (2017: 25) argues that the BRICS are "best understood as a new, more malevolent force within a general framework of neoliberal extractivism, amplifying the already extreme uneven and combined development so damaging to Africa" rather than offering alternatives. The bloc's assimilation into several multilateral institutions—the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, and the UN Framework for the Convention on Climate Change—is symptomatic of this situation (Bond, *ibid.*).

In the case of China, the largest and most influential of the BRICS economies, the state supports private capital through the China-Africa Development Fund, a private equity fund. The fund was set up with a commitment from the China Development Bank of \$5 billion for Chinese corporations to invest in agriculture in Africa over the next 50 years (Johnny 2008, cited in GRAIN, 2008). Typically, this has taken the form of Chinese companies "leasing or buying up land, setting up large farms, flying in farmers, scientists and extension workers, and getting down to the work of crop production" (GRAIN, 2008: 3). Agricultural co-operation deals have been agreed in which Chinese firms gain access to farmland in a range of African countries in exchange for Chinese technologies, training, and infrastructure development (GRAIN, 2008).

Analysts in the global political community have often laid the responsibility for large-scale land deals at the door of post-independence states themselves, given their apparent weak governance of the land sector and tenure security (Deininger, 2011). As a result, improved governance tends to be championed as the solution to addressing some of the most negative features of land deals, namely "forced dispossession, speculative behaviour, corruption and a general lack of

transparency” (Wolford *et al.*, 2013: 2). While improvements in land governance are certainly needed in many countries, the claim that poorly-governed countries are the most vulnerable to land grabs has been vigorously challenged. To give an example, Brazil, which is involved in land acquisitions in other parts of the Global South, is on the receiving end of land investments from Asia, Europe and the Americas, even though it is not considered to have a weak governance system (Borras and Franco, 2010; see also Fairbairn, 2013, on Mozambique). Moreover, governments are being actively advised by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, among others, to change land ownership policies and practices to increase incentives for foreign investment in farmlands. A major target of the World Bank’s \$1.2 billion package to address the food crisis in Africa in 2008 was to change land ownership laws (GRAIN, 2008). As pointed out earlier, the World Bank has also been involved in the liberalisation of mining legislation (Campbell, 2010, cited in Prause, 2016).

The state has played different roles in extractivist processes and relations. Where rent relations are being developed, three roles are significant (Andreucci *et al.*, 2017). First, the state establishes property rights and entitlements that enable rent to be extracted, such as concession rights for mineral exploitation, and the allocation of farmland for agricultural production (p. 12). Second, the state plays a regulatory role, for example, in land development. In new forms of ownership, the state puts in place legislative frameworks enabling the patenting of genetically modified organisms and may police the use of the resulting intellectual property. Third, the state can sometimes act as a landlord, such as when it is the actual owner of the resource (e.g. land) itself (Andreucci *et al.*, 2017).

In practice, many African governments are actively involved in supporting land grabs by both foreign investors and local elites. Kachika (2010) draws attention to how this has taken place in Mali, Tanzania, Senegal, and Ethiopia. The state has used its regulatory and coercive powers to dispossess pastoralists in Tanzania and quell resistance to resource grabbing. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta has long been a site of major confrontations between communities and government security forces, resulting in massive violations of the rights of those protesting against the activities of oil corporations in the area—Shell, Chevron, Mobil, Elf and Agip (Human Rights Watch, 1999; Ekine, 2000). Attacks on communities by the military have involved the killing of protesters, looting and destruction of property, and rape

and sexual slavery of women and girls (Ekine, 2000). In this issue, Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro highlight the growing militarisation and aggressive policing of Mozambican communities affected by extractivism. Women face numerous challenges in their efforts to resist the exploitative and violent social relations unleashed by the government's economic policies.

Local-level elites play a critical role in large-scale land grabs, exerting control over access to land through their exercise of power via traditional authority, bureaucratic influence, historical access, locally-based business knowledge and networks, and the power to set development agendas (Fairbairn, 2013). In Mozambique for example, despite it having some of the most progressive land laws in Africa, there has been extensive peasant dispossession in the current land grab. Class inequality and the actions of elite Mozambicans operate as filters mediating the impact of land deals. Given this localised level of control, the end results of land deals vary considerably from one part of the country to another. Although community land rights and traditional forms of access to land are emphasised at a rhetorical level, in practice, local elites compete with one another in seeking to bypass these forms of access when faced with the possibility of profiting from expropriation (Fairbairn, *ibid.*).

Chinese engagement in artisanal and small-scale mining, often illegal in informal mining economies such as Ghana's (Hilson *et al.*, 2014) is another illustration of the role that local elites play in resource extraction by foreign capital. Contrary to reports in the local media that Chinese migrants have "taken over" the informal mining sector, the authors show that Chinese migrants' entry into the country is facilitated by partnership with local operators and other nationals, as well as with Chinese-owned service companies operating in Ghana. It is important to recognise that the growing Chinese participation in artisanal and small-scale mining is facilitated by state neglect and repression of the informal gold mining economy, which is burdened by a regulatory framework that discourages legalisation. Desperate individuals operate in this shadowy economy, in marked contrast to the formal large-scale mining sector, where the state provides generous tax breaks to corporations in an effort to attract foreign investment (Hilson *et al.*, 2014).

In spite of the collaborative activities of local elites, segments of local communities have resisted the dispossession and other disruptive effects of

extractivism on their communities and livelihoods. In the next section, we examine various forms of resistance, with particular attention to women's struggles.

Responses and Resistance to Extractivism

Ecofeminism constitutes a significant political and intellectual force for resistance to extractivism. There are diverse strands of thought within this field, some focusing on material conditions (e.g. WoMIN, 2013, 2015) and others emphasising women's personal and spiritual connections to nature (see Allison, 2017). In 1993, Mies and Shiva joined forces in what they describe as their materialist approach to ecofeminism. Their edited collection, *Ecofeminism*, has been recognised as raising important points such as the proposition that modern science, colonialism and development should be understood as interrelated processes. However, Mies and Shiva's underlying assumptions have been critiqued as deeply flawed (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995) in conflating nature with women instead of analysing specific historical and socially constituted gender relations.

Secondly, Mies and Shiva's championing of women-centred spontaneous grassroots struggles as the only meaningful political action for women, i.e. outside the sphere of male power, has been cast as ultimately being unable to "generat[e] a politics adequate to the enormity of the threat to survival presented by environmental degradation" (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995:103). Whilst this is not an argument against the potential power of rural women's struggles, it does raise the important question of what kind of politics, alliances, and organising, and in what contexts, are necessary for resisting extractivism and instituting alternatives.

Local communities tend to be made up of varied social classes and groups with differing degrees of political power and varying, often competing interests, and "highly differentiated access to, control over, and use of land resources" (Borras and Franco, 2010: 34). It is useful, therefore, to disaggregate the "rural poor", a term which encompasses men and women who are poor peasants, small-scale farmers, agro-processors and traders, landless rural labourers, pastoralists, and subsistence fishers. The non-poor include chiefs, rich farmers, landlords, moneylenders, aggregators, and large traders. This is important because the changes in both land use and land property relations brought about by the emerging food-fuel agro-industrial complex will affect the various social classes and groups within the local community differently. They will therefore have different political

responses to trans/national commercial land deals.

It is also the case that the views of the rural poor affected by mega development projects may be different from those of social movements and organised groups in civil society oriented towards the rural poor. Questions of how issues are framed and the resulting demands, as well as their underlying bases, are likely to differ across diverse kinds of groups in civil society. Competing views of the problem, strategies for change and the alternatives envisioned may be differentiated on the basis of class and gender as well as ideological orientation towards the dominant development framework. Issue-framing, strategies and alternatives are also likely to vary between the rural poor in affected villages and organised advocacy groups. Environmental activists, for example, are likely to have different priorities from crop producers in rural areas, who are more likely to frame their issues and demands around the terms on which they produce and sell their crops (Borras and Franco, 2010).

Some of the most successful examples of resistance to extractivism therefore are those that privilege both livelihoods and environmental issues and are driven by communities. The Green Belt Movement (GBM) founded in Kenya in 1977 by Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, is instructive as an example of a rural struggle that took such an approach. The GBM was set up partly in response to rural women identifying needs they could no longer meet—the provision of firewood, clean drinking water, balanced diets, shelter, and income. This was not only because rural environments were being degraded. Additionally, “forests [were] being cleared and replaced by commercial plantations, which destroyed local biodiversity and the capacity of the forests to conserve water” (Maathai, 2004). Commercial farming was also replacing household crop growing. Tree planting became a way of dealing with rural women’s immediate needs, while protecting local biodiversity, indigenous trees, and medicinal plants. By 2004, the GBM had planted over 30 million trees; they provided fuel, food, shelter, and income to support children’s education and household needs while creating employment and improving the soil (Maathai, 2004).

In Senegal, an example of effective community-based opposition to extractivism is that of the conflicts between artisanal miners and the Canadian corporate mining firm Teranga Gold Corporation. These conflicts flare up on numerous occasions, particularly when the Corporation closes down sites used by artisanal and small-scale miners. Since high-grade gold deposits tend to be

found in small, restricted areas and migration elsewhere is not an easy option, once artisanal miners lose access to their sites, they lose their central means of gaining a living. In the absence of alternative modes of making a living, miners' confrontations with the corporation and the police are ultimately conflicts over livelihoods (Prause, 2016).

Much community opposition to mining concerns confrontations between labour and capital. Accounts of such opposition have tended to address primarily the production sphere, with the focus on (male) workers, their employers, and unions (Benya, 2015). The locations in which such struggles and conflicts occur are overlooked, thus ignoring the role of women in sustaining the dynamic relations between production and social reproduction. Asanda Benya's (2015) analysis of women's experiences at the time of the massacre of 34 striking miners in Marikana, South Africa, on 16 August 2012, showed that women's work in the home was pivotal in sustaining a mining economy predicated on the sale of labour power below the cost of its reproduction. Women were also actively involved in sustaining the strike action; their work in the home and in the community was thus "crucial not only for the accumulation of capital, but also for resisting it" (Benya, 2015: 556).

In the Niger Delta, women's responses, and resistance to the violence of the Nigerian military state has taken varied forms (Ekiné, 2000). When soldiers descended on towns and communities, most people would run away to escape the shootings, burning and destruction; many of the elderly women, however, refused to run away. Responses to the rape and sexual violence that military personnel perpetrated were varied across communities. When soldiers invaded the town of Choba on 28 October 1999, the rape of women was filmed by a journalist and published in Nigerian newspapers. Survivors in Choba turned inwards, supporting one another through the combined trauma of not only having been raped publicly but also being forced to endure the personal and community-wide shame of having photos of their violations circulating publicly. Elsewhere, Ogoniland had already been the site of sustained organising against both the Nigerian government and the oil company, Shell, when the military state began a three-year campaign of violence against the Ogoni people in 1993. Survivors of sexual violence spoke out publicly about their experiences and became highly organised, subsequently engaging in "collective action as an act of resistance in their struggle and coordinat[ing] their

activities with men in the community” (Ekine, 2008: 77). Subsequently, women from three different ethnic groups—Ijaw, Itsekiri and Ilaje—organised unprecedented mass protests between June and August 2002, laying aside previous differences. Thousands of women occupied eight oil facilities belonging to Chevron/Texaco and Shell Petroleum. Women’s political awareness of the divide-and-rule tactics used by oil corporations as well as successive Nigerian governments informed their solidarity across ethnic divides. “[T]he situation had become so desperate that many women realised that such cooperation was essential for their success” (Ekine, 2008: 79).

With regard to agribusiness, resistance to large-scale land deals is growing considerably. The actions of companies as they “tear down forests, dig up burial sites, fence off pastoral zones and pollute the air and water” generate conflicting claims over lands and territories (GRAIN, 2016: 9). Opposition to the deals, from communities and the organisations that support them, grows as security forces clash with community members and civil society, and activists and journalists face harassment from lawyers. Increasingly, connections across different kinds of struggles against agribusiness are being made. Farmers’ organisations in Senegal, for example, are supporting pastoralists who are affected by large-scale projects. Urban groups displaced by industrial development projects in Mali are among the first to travel to rural areas to help farmers defend their land. Connections across national boundaries are also being made by communities in different countries, who are negatively affected by the land-grabbing activities of the same corporation (e.g. Dominion Farm). These communities are organising to support and learn from one another. There are also more cross-sector struggles, taking the form of solidarity among those opposing biofuel initiatives and those opposing mining projects (GRAIN, 2016).

Protests and struggles against extractivism in North Africa have engaged peasant communities, grassroots organisations, and social movements, not without tensions (Hamouchene, 2019). Instances of resistance in North Africa have been viewed as representing the environmentalism of the poor, which is less about “the conservation of exotic species or pristine nature” and more about “a quest for environmental and social justice and a fight against the social exclusion, the violence and authoritarianism of neoliberalism and its elites” (p. 16). The ecological dimension of the resistance takes second place to more keenly felt

problems – “socioeconomic rights such as jobs, development of urban and rural infrastructure, distribution of wealth, and democratisation of decision-making” (p. 16).

The import of these responses and acts of resistance to extractivism is to imagine another world in which environmental and socio-economic sustainability of communities and the economy are the norm. In the next and final section of this article, we discuss alternatives to extractivism as expressed by feminist intellectuals and movements. We are particularly interested in the possibilities that these afford for subverting the current trajectory of patriarchal and capitalist development towards a more transformative agenda.

Alternatives to Extractivism

Various movements, scholars and institutions have converged to address the restructuring of ecologies, economies and politics brought about by extractivist activities. Feminist critiques of capitalist accumulation have proposed alternative political, economic, and social arrangements where the emphasis is on the production of *life*, not commodities (e.g. Mies, 2005). Sylvia Tamale (2020) emphasises the need for an alternative to the dualistic anthropocentrism inherent in the Western colonial worldview and its hegemonic orientations to the natural world. The dichotomised logic of this worldview creates hierarchical relations between humans and the rest of the natural world, marked by human supremacy. This informs the predatory exploitation of the natural world that lies at the heart of extractivism, “disrupt[ing] the healthy web of life in ways that threaten the very foundation of life itself” (p. 85).

Tamale (*ibid.*) contrasts the dualisms of Western philosophy with the distinctly different philosophies underlying indigenous knowledge systems in which people’s relations to the world are shaped by connections and continuities. For many African communities, people are part of the natural world and not partitioned from it. The underlying philosophy – *Ubuntu* – “celebrate[s] the values which connect past and present, as well as humans and nature” (p. 85). Hence women who work on the land share a “long history of ecological consciousness and moral obligation towards future generations” (p. 85), as evident in the activism of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. Tamale thus proposes that *Ubuntu* provides an alternative philosophy – and with it an alternative orientation to being and acting in the world – to the current worldview which naturalises extractivism.

Feminist economists have critiqued mainstream understandings of the economy for decades. Kate Raworth's (2017) *Doughnut Economics* is a recent example of an effort to rethink the economy on a systemic basis, drawing on ecological, feminist, institutional and behavioural economics. The goal of endless growth and wealth accumulation in mainstream economics is radically shifted to one of promoting human wellbeing "within the means of our planet" (p. 28). Here, the economy is viewed as embedded within limits set by the social foundation—food, education, housing, health—as well as the ecological ceiling i.e. the Earth's life-giving systems. The safe and just space for humanity's existence emerges, doughnut-shaped, encircled above and below by the ecological and social limits, respectively. The myth of the self-contained, self-sustaining market is unravelled to show that the provisioning of wealth takes place in previously excluded zones – the household, the commons, the state – not just the market. These excluded arenas are embedded within and dependent upon society, itself embedded within the living world (Raworth, *ibid.*). Within the household, as feminists have shown for decades, it is predominantly women and girls that carry out the unpaid care work that is so central to setting the social limits.

Viewed in system terms, the economy is re-envisioned as an open subsystem of the closed Earth system. Not only does the economy "depend[s] upon Earth as a *source*—extracting finite resources such as oil, clay, cobalt and copper, and harvesting renewable ones such as timber, crops, fish and fresh water", but the earth acts as "a *sink* for [the economy's] wastes" (Raworth, 2017: 64). The extraction of natural resources generates waste, which cannot be wished away. Moreover, Raworth points out that the economy's fundamental resource flow is not money but energy—directly or indirectly from the sun. Without energy, nothing can move, grow, or work. The economy should be more distributive by design, not only of income but also of wealth, "particularly the wealth that lies in controlling land, enterprise, technology, knowledge and the power to make money" (Raworth, 2017: 23).

Women's autonomous organising internationally is a major force in the struggle against extractivism. Notable in this regard is the feminist anti-capitalist movement, *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres*—the World March of Women (WMW).¹⁰ The movement was inspired by the Women's March Against Poverty (*La Marche du Pain et des Roses*) in 1995 in Quebec. Twenty-five women from women's groups

in 14 countries in Africa, Asia, South and Central America participated. Slowly, the idea of mobilising women across the world in an international campaign against poverty and violence emerged. Organised by the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* (FFQ), the project of the World March of Women 2000 was launched in Quebec in 1998 (Dufour, 2005).

WMW's starting point is that women are active subjects in the struggle to transform their lives and that to do this, it is necessary to overhaul the patriarchal, racist, homophobic, climate-destroying capitalist system. With this in mind, WMW organises among women in urban as well as rural locations, and also forms alliances with social movements. The movement seeks to construct a feminist perspective that affirms equality and women's rights to autonomy as the basis for its envisioned alternative society.¹¹ By 2013, WMW was active in 62 countries; its ninth International Assembly in São Paulo, Brazil—home to the international co-ordination centre—was attended by around 1,600 women. The meeting enabled those present to take stock of WMW's trajectory of building a popular feminism, rooted in local struggles but also connected to international actions.¹²

Every five years, WMW organises international solidarity campaigns. These campaigns now take place on 24 April, in memory of the thousands who died—mostly women garment workers—on that day in 2013 when the Rana Plaza factory collapsed, in Bangladesh's worst industrial accident.¹³ The fifth such international solidarity campaign, in 2020, took the form of a protest against the power and impunity of transnational corporations—"the protagonists of racist and patriarchal capitalism".¹⁴ The power of corporations, WMW points out, continues to be supported by extreme right wing forces in power, thus reinforcing authoritarianism and violence, the dispossession of communities and denial of basic rights. For WMW, "The conflict is between capital and life. We defend life!"¹⁵ The movement rejects "wars, economic sanctions and blockades, militarisation and transnational armies, tools of terror, rape and systematic assassination of social fighters."¹⁶ WMW's struggles to transform society are informed by a view of the economy as inseparable from politics, health, and life. In multiple sites—neighbourhoods, schools, fields, streets and networks—WMW has been building alternatives, such as the construction of the solidarity economy, agroecology, food sovereignty, popular communication and the organised movement itself (Fernandes, 2018).¹⁷

On the African continent, WoMin, a continental network of activists, has been actively engaged in research and action. Their interventions have addressed themes such as international and regional policy and human rights frameworks, women miners, land and food sovereignty, women's unpaid labour and contributions to the extractive industries, the impact of extractivism on women's bodies, sexuality and autonomy, and artisanal mining (WoMin, 2013). WoMin has also carried out participatory action research on the impacts of extractivism on women in East, West, and Southern Africa (WoMin, 2015), and has used their analysis to frame targeted demands of the African Union and African governments. Feminist research and action, such as that by WoMin, has drawn attention to ways in which extractivism not only involves the drive to exact ever-increasing profit from the extraction of natural resources, but also deepens the extraction of women's labour in the process.

A notable example of women organising alongside progressive social movements in resistance to extractivism was evident at the Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy, in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2018. An excerpt from the final Statement points to the Forum's collective analysis of extractivism, highlighting the heterogeneity of groups affected as well as important aspects of their common experiences:

Peasants, small-scale farmers, migrants, refugees, pastoralists, displaced persons, indigenous and working-class women are enslaved by this extractivist, patriarchal development model. They work hard to guarantee the survival of family and community under increasingly precarious conditions. Their labour of care, subsistence production, social reproduction and the recreation of fragile threatened ecosystems is invisible, unrecognised, and undervalued. Their labour subsidises capital's profits and serves the interests of patriarchy. (Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy, 2018: 3)

It is worth noting that this statement was produced by a wide range of groups. Participants at the Thematic Social Forum above came from "mining-affected communities, trade unions, people's organizations, the women's movement, LGBTI people, faith-based groups, indigenous peoples, workers, small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, youth, support groups and academics from 60 countries, including from 28 African countries, as well as from the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe" (p. 3).

Their overall aim is to work towards a future free from the destructive consequences of extractivism, through a just transition which involves the transformation of production and consumption patterns as well as social organisation. Ultimately, this is about building “a new, democratic, eco-feminist and post-capitalist order” (*ibid*: 8) through common struggles and the consolidation of a broad-based movement of resistance.

These diverse struggles against extractivism, some more sustained and more effective than others, highlight the complexities in understandings of the phenomenon and the intellectual and organisational responses to its current dominance.

Concluding thoughts

We have argued that extractivism—the increasingly ruthless exploitation and appropriation of the broad range of natural resources found across Africa by corporations, the BRICS countries, states, and local elites—has been manifested in disparate forms across the continent and is embedded in the changing dynamics of contemporary capitalism. Differences in these manifestations arise partly as a result of colonial history; partly due to the types of resources extracted – food, agriculture, land and water, in contrast to oil, gas and minerals; and partly due to the impact of financial speculation in different parts of Africa. The neoliberal emphasis on free markets and the primacy of private interests exacerbates the gender, class, and other inequalities arising from extractivist processes and their destructive consequences. The BRICS countries, many of them former colonies themselves, have played active roles in serving imperial interests through their predatory engagement in extractivism. The dynamics involved are specific to African contexts, and thus not addressed in the oft-quoted and highly influential literature of South and Central America.

Our analysis points to the need for greater attention to African feminist analyses of context and the conceptualisation of extractivism, its gendered impact on communities and livelihoods, and the ways in which it relies on and exacerbates the burden of women’s unrecognised and unremunerated labour. All these shape women’s resistance to extractivism, their propositions for anti-capitalist alternatives and the possibilities of transformation of economies, social relations, and our relations to the natural world. In the wake of the tremendous inequalities and

destruction resulting from extractivist activities, feminists have organised within and across national borders, in the forefront of struggles for a world free from social, political, and economic injustices and violence.

Endnotes

1. “Economic globalisation refers to the increasing interdependence of world economies because of the growing scale of cross-border trade of commodities and services, flow of international capital and wide and rapid spread of technologies. It reflects the continuing expansion and mutual integration of market frontiers.... Multinational corporations (MNCs) have become the main carriers of economic globalisation. They are globally organising production and allocating resources according to the principle of profit maximization. And their global expansions are reshaping macroeconomic mechanisms of the operation of the world economies” (Gao, 2000: 1-2).
2. Financialisation refers to the increase in the size and importance of a country’s financial sector relative to the overall economy, representing a shift away from industrial capitalism on a global scale. See also Epstein’s (2005) definition in the discussion of financialisation later in this article.
3. Accumulation based on predation, fraud, and violence.
4. The countries involved are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Equatorial Guinea is the only country in this group that is not a former French colony.
5. These countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Guinea Bissau also uses the CFA; it is the only country in the group that is not a former French colony.
6. This is the acronym used to refer to the group of five emerging national economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—with significant influence on regional affairs.
7. Teodor Shanin, one of the authors, died in Moscow on 4 February 2020.
8. Emphasis in the original.
9. The term “land grab” has come to refer to a new wave of trans/national land speculation and commercial land transactions predominantly for the purpose of large-scale production and export of food, animal feed, biofuels, minerals and timber (Borras and Franco, 2012).
10. <https://www.onacional.com.br/brasil,5/2020/05/17/marcha-mundial-das-mulheres,40970> -<https://grassrootsonline.org/who-we-are/partner/world-march-of-women-wmw/>
11. <https://marchamulheres.wordpress.com/mmm/>
12. <https://www.onacional.com.br/brasil,5/2020/05/17/marcha-mundial-das-mulheres,40970>
13. “Bangladesh factory collapse toll passes 1,000”, 10 May 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22476774>

14. <https://marchmondiale.org/index.php/2020/04/23/the-conflict-is-between-capital-and-life-we-defend-life/>
15. <https://marchmondiale.org/index.php/2020/04/23/the-conflict-is-between-capital-and-life-we-defend-life/>
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

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