

Feminist Reflections

#2

DEZ. 2018



BEYOND EXTRACTIVISM: FEMINIST ALTERNATIVES FOR A SOCIALLY AND GENDER JUST DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Zo Randriamaro

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The first section analyses the characteristics of the economic framework of extractivism, including the local, national, regional and global interconnections. The second section explores its hidden environmental and social costs, followed by the analysis of the gender dimensions of extractivism in the third section. The last section discusses the necessary steps and the existing building blocks towards alternative development models.



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and authoritarianism. This paper provides an analysis of the current development models from a feminist perspective and presents ideas for socially and gender just alternatives to the extractivist economic system.

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1. The economic framework of extractivism

Overcoming extractivism requires confronting multiple social, economic and environmental problems in the short and longer term. But first and foremost, it implies a clear understanding of the workings of the extractivist system. Therefore this first section is meant to provide conceptual clarity about the economic framework of extractivism. To that end, it starts with the definition of the key elements of the concept of extractivism and its economic, political and social implications. The typology and the main drivers of extractivism in Africa are also explored, along with its impacts on economic development.

The concept of extractivism

The definition of the term “extractivism” has two key elements:

- *The first element refers to the process of extraction of raw materials such as minerals, oil and gas, as well as water, fish and forest products, new forms of energy such as hydroelectricity, and industrial forms of agriculture, which often involve land and water grabbing by the extractive industries.*

- *The second element refers to the conditions under which this extraction process takes place, and whose interests it serves, in the framework of a dominant and highly unequal model of development which is geared for the exploitation and marketing of natural resources in the global South for export to the rich economies of the global North.*

As such, this extractivist development model “organizes the political, socio-economic and cultural relations within the respective country or region: the economy and class structures, gender relations, the state and public discourse” (Brand, 2013, cited in WoMin, 2014).

This extractivist development model has been in place and perpetuated since colonial times, regardless of the sustainability of the extractive projects and resource exhaustion. It originates in the process of “primitive accumulation” in the colonial context, whereby “the extraction of natural resources in the colonies fed the colonial centres with the raw materials, energy, minerals and food the colonisers needed to accumulate capital and fuel their development’ (Galeano, 1971). Most of the time, extractivism has created relations of dependency and domination between the providers and consumers of raw materials.

While the post-colonial nation states gained their political independence, they remained trapped in their subordinate position as providers of cheap raw materials and low-cost labour in a system of transnational capitalism. The commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; conversion of various forms of property rights – common, collective, state, etc. – into exclusive private property rights; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative, indigenous, forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial and imperial processes of appropriation of assets, including natural



resources; monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; slave trade; and usury, the national debt and ultimately the credit system (Harvey, 2004, p.74).

Under both the colonial and post-colonial periods, the required dispossession of peasants and accumulation of the natural resources essential for the global North's industrial development and prosperity is done through a violent series of capitalist extraction.

The typology of extractivism

Three types of extractivism have been identified by Eduardo Gudynas (2010):

(a) **Predatory extractivism** is currently the dominant form in Africa as well as in other regions of the world, with serious social, environmental, economic and political impacts discussed in more detail in section 2. This category includes neo-extractivism, which has emerged as a result of the efforts by some progressive and/or socialist States in Latin America and Africa¹ to strengthen the role of the State in the exploitation and ownership of natural resources over the past decade (Gudynas, 2010; Aguilar, 2012). Thus, laws and policies have been established to ensure national redistribution through the provision of public and social services. The financing for those services comes directly from the benefits of natural resource extraction that accrue to the States.

However, according to some analysts, 'Latin American neo-extractivism has demonstrated the limitations of this model of expecting exports and foreign investment to solve historical and structural problems of inequality, inequity, and above all, the destruction of the environment ...' (Aguilar, 2012, p. 7). As such, in this new development model, extractivism is intensified by governments, thereby inducing more

¹ These countries include Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, Bolivia and Zimbabwe.

conflicts over natural resources and further externalization of social and environmental costs to communities, without meaningful employment opportunities and improved living conditions in these affected communities.

(b) **Cautious or moderate extractivism** considers some social and environmental concerns, as well as some level of community participation. However, this type of extractivism fails to substantially change the current structure of accumulation and move away from predatory appropriation of nature.

(c) **Indispensable extraction** is not a model of extractivism because its intent and practice is reduced resource extraction and promotion of sustainability through recycling, tightening up laws, policies and regulatory systems to close unfair material and resource flows, radically reduce pressures on eco-systems and minimise contributions to emissions (Gudynas, 2010).



The drivers of extractivism in Africa

Extractivism has been a constant in the economic, social and political trajectories of many African countries, with varying degrees of intensity. Since colonial times, the abundance of natural resources that characterises those countries has contributed to determine their position as primary commodity export economies in the global economic order. The predominance of extractivism in African economies is not only due to colonisation, but also to the hegemony of the neoliberal ideology underlying the global economic order.



raw materials and a cycle of high prices. However, the recently decreasing prices of minerals and hydrocarbons has led to further expansion of extractive frontiers to offset the fall in prices. Extractivism is also driven by the overconsumption of energy in rich and emerging economies, the increasing energy needs of the global South and the exponential increase in demand for primary commodities in countries like China and India.

In the countries of the global North, even the growing movement for environment protection is putting pressure on the impoverished countries of the global South to open their territory to satisfy the global economy's demand for minerals and raw materials. Against this background, it is widely recognised that poverty correlates with the existence of natural resources in many countries whose economy is based primarily on extracting and exporting those resources. In addition to this resource curse (Acosta, 2009), these countries are plagued by high rates of inequality, corruption, human rights abuse, and environmental degradation (Acosta, 2013, OXFAM 2017).

The role played by international financial institutions (IFIs) has been particularly important in this regard. Thus, in the aftermath of the global financial and energy crisis during the last decade, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have strongly promoted extractivism as the major engine to fuel economic growth, which is considered by these IFIs as the prerequisite of 'development' in countries of the global South and North.

In addition, natural resource extraction has become an important site for speculation and rapid profit-making in the financial markets for financiers and investors, as well as for blocs of Northern countries such as 'the European Commission that has coordinated the Raw Materials Initiative, which aims to safeguard their access to raw materials in the international market, and give strong backing to multinationals to secure premium investments in European interests' (Aguilar, 2012, cited in WoMin 2014).

In the last decade, the marked increase of extractive activities in Africa is linked with the strong international demand for



2. Extractivism and economic development

The position of many African countries as providers of cheap primary commodities affects their economic structures and the allocation of production factors therein. Despite the large scale of extractive industries, these generate few benefits for the exporting countries. Likewise, most of the goods, inputs and specialist services required to operate the extractive industries rarely come from national companies based in the exporting countries.

This is particularly obvious in mineral and oil exporting countries, where the dynamic linkages that are so necessary to achieve coherent economic development² do not exist, while the redistribution of income is highly unequal, and wealth is concentrated in a small minority. The extractive sector is characterised by a high demand for capital and technology, isolation from other economic sectors and lack of integration with the rest of the economy and society. As such, it exacerbates 'the fragmentation of territories, with relegated areas and extractive enclaves linked to global markets' (Gudynas 2010). Volatile prices of raw materials are inherent to the world market, which means that an economy based on the export of primary commodities suffers recurrent balance of payments and fiscal deficit issues (Acosta, 2013). In this situation, the national economy becomes dependent on financial markets and exposes its development to erratic fluctuations.

In most cases, the major beneficiaries of the extractivist activities are the transnational corporations (TNCs), which are sought after by African States as the main source of foreign direct investment for exploring and exploiting their natural resources. TNCs usually enjoy a

favourable regulatory framework together with tax breaks and incentives in the African countries where they operate. Furthermore, in several instances, some of these TNCs have taken advantage of their contribution to the balance of trade to influence governments in favour of their interests.

The TNCs and their State allies are used to highlight the monetary value of the mineral and oil reserves they have found to promote public support of natural resource extraction. However, the figures presented do not take into account the so-called 'hidden social and environmental costs' (Acosta, 2013). For instance, these costs frequently include the displacement of the affected communities, pollution, along with the perverse subsidies granted to the extractive projects through their free or cheap access to water, energy, and infrastructure (Gudynas, 2010). Such costs represent economic losses that are invisible in the extractive projects' accounts, because these costs are externalized onto the affected communities.



² Notably forward (beneficiation and value addition), backward (local procurement, etc.), fiscal (royalties, corporate taxes, etc.), spatial (infrastructure) and knowledge (skill and technology development) linkages.



The hidden social and environmental costs

Driven by the high profits associated with natural resource extraction and the underpinning neoliberal ideology, many African governments have refocused their attention on enabling the large-scale extraction and export of primary commodities. As happened in Latin America, the political economy of extractivism in the concerned African countries is marked by a move towards the so-called “Commodities Consensus, focused not on the re-design of the state but on enabling the large-scale export of primary products” with significant political and social impacts, namely the creation of “new forms of dependency and domination” (Svampa, 2013).

In this section, the spatial and temporal impacts of this Commodities Consensus are discussed, along with its impacts on working-class people, and its interconnections with conflicts, violence and militarisation.

Impacts of the Commodities Consensus at spatial and temporal scales

The gigantic scale of extractive operations causes irreversible environmental devastation, which is generally acknowledged as the inevitable cost of achieving development in the concerned countries. This is despite evidence that the large majority of extractivist activities can never be made ‘sustainable’ because their very essence is destructive. For example, studies of mining or the oil industries have found evidence of the many ways in which Nature is damaged and irreversibly destroyed.

Such studies have also revealed the human tragedies resulting from extractivism’s social and environmental impacts at both spatial and temporal scales. The direct impacts on rural, peasant and indigenous communities are disastrous, as these communities lose their access to the natural resources upon which they depend for their livelihoods, reproduction, and cultural traditions.

In particular, land dispossessions can occur directly through land grabs for extractivist operations or indirectly through loss of land entailed by water grabs by extractive companies, pollution, and climate change. As such, land dispossessions linked to extractivism always imply the loss of food sovereignty, i.e. the infringement of ‘the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems’ (Nyeleni Declaration 2007). The impacts are also affecting communities all along the value chain, including points of extraction, processing, transportation and shipping of primary commodities.



In rural areas, where men are leaving to work in the mines, women are particularly impacted by the labour force shortage for food production, subsistence and cash crop production and the burden of caring for ill miners. Furthermore, these impacts are also felt for decades or even centuries as the affected communities continue to bear the brunt of polluted water, soil and air, and the accumulated impacts of extractive activities, notably in the form of climate change, which is a direct result of the massive greenhouse gas emissions by the extractive industries of rich countries.

The impacts of extractivism on working-class people

Under colonialism, extractivist activities had relied on the deadly exploitation of labour of colonised subjects, including through indenture and enslavement (Gedicks, 1993; Banerjee, 2000). In the post-colonial period, many people working in the extractive and its linked industries continue to work under unsafe and degrading conditions³ and to earn low wages, despite promises of new jobs and development within extractive industries by TNCs and their State allies. In fact, it appears that the poor regulatory framework for extractive industries has allowed TNCs to take advantage of loose health and safety standards in resource-rich African countries and pay low wages to maximize their profits.

Likewise, TNCs usually hire foreigners to fill the highest paying managerial positions, leaving the most labour intensive and lowest paying jobs to local community members. The migrant labour system has been used by TNCs to address the difficulties in the availability of local labour force in the extractive sectors of mineral-rich countries like South Africa. Moreover, this system has not only allowed TNCs to maximise profits

by preventing family migration, but also the burden of the social reproduction of the labour force and the next generation of workers is left to communities in the labour-sending rural areas. In this regard, women's unpaid labour has been crucial to both the primitive and neoliberal accumulation strategies, as further discussed in the next section.

In Latin America and Africa alike, a key feature of the contemporary relationship between extractivism and working people is the emergence of a 'new proletariat', composed of the social groups in rural areas who bear the brunt of the negative impacts of extractive industries, namely miners, waged workers, rural landless workers, indigenous communities, and peasant farmer communities (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2013; Hogenboom, 2012). Within these social groups, women are disproportionately affected by these impacts and are located at the forefront of the class struggle and resistance against extractivism, as discussed in more detail in section 3.



³ For instance, workers are often exposed to toxic chemicals with their negative health impacts.

Conflicts, violence and militarisation

The expansion of extractive activities and their diversification into new areas, such as hydroelectricity, have been accompanied by the explosion of conflicts around social and environmental issues between communities fighting against natural resource exploitation and environmental destruction by the forces of global capital. These social-environmental conflicts result in repeated clashes, violence, repression and human rights abuses perpetrated by the State and/or security forces.

With respect to mining industries, local resistance is driven by the decision of governments to force the entrance of large-scale mining projects operated by foreign TNCs into the territories of indigenous communities. This liberalization of mineral extraction has induced the violation of indigenous peoples' ancestral land rights. Moreover, it has enabled the dispossession of natural resources and territories, while the attempts of TNCs and/or governments to quell local resistance have led to increased securitisation of extractive industries and militarisation of the affected territories.

In the militarised territories, the military is working in tandem with the TNCs' private security to control the movement and activity of local communities. Together, they are tasked to protect mineral extraction projects from those who stand in the way of 'development'. Militarisation and securitisation foment deeply entrenched violence in communities along with violence against workers and women.

Furthermore, the strong commitment by African governments to develop the extractive economy has led to their unwillingness, in many instances, to consider demands for social and environmental justice and/or allow communities and civil society to play a meaningful role in the decision-making processes related to the extractive sector. Increasingly, criminalization of protest by community and civil society activists has become a key corporate and state strategy to annihilate resistance against extractivism.

Thus, violence is intrinsic to and inseparable from extractivism as a development model and the extractives industries, which stand to profit from their political connections to elected politicians, the military and the national elite. In the context of these transnationalised arrangements, the State tends to take a relatively hands-off attitude to the extractive enclaves, leaving these areas outside the remit of national regulation altogether and ignores its social and economic obligations towards the affected communities. All this perpetuates widespread violence against communities, workers, women, and ecosystems, together with growing poverty and exclusion, with disproportionate impacts on women and girls, as further discussed below.





3. Women, gender and extractivism

A gender perspective is crucial to the analysis of the extractivist system and its impacts. In the various local contexts, women, girls, men, and boys have different experiences as they engage with the extractivist system and its impacts. Most of the time, women and girls suffer more than men and boys from the negative impacts of extractive industries without receiving meaningful benefits from them. This section explores the main aspects of women's involvement in extractive industries, along with the gendered impacts of extractivism on women's rights in Africa.

Women's involvement in extractive industries

In substance, the analyses of women's involvement as part of the workforce in large-scale extractive industries fall under two opposing viewpoints that focus on addressing the exclusion of women from the benefits of natural resource extraction on the one hand and the plight of women miners due to gender-specific issues on the other. With respect to the liberal viewpoint that it is essential to end the marginalisation of women in the extractive sector, especially in terms of employment, the extractivist development model itself is not an issue. What is needed is the integration of gender considerations and women into the structures and workings of the extractivist system, notably through legal and regulatory reforms to ensure that women benefit equally with men from natural resource extraction.

This liberal position is illustrated by the case of the 'Gender, Transformative Leadership and Extractive Industries' project in South Africa (UN Women, 2016), where many large-scale mining companies have adopted the recruitment of women as a key corporate strategy and promoted women's employment opportunities as miners. As

such, the proponents of this liberal viewpoint do not question the capitalist nature of the extractivist system and its implications.

By contrast, the viewpoint that focuses on the gender-specific issues facing women in extractive industries highlights women's 'experiences of sexual harassment, unequal wages, and poor working conditions of a gender-specific nature in the mines' (WoMin, 2014 p. 4). Its analysis goes 'beyond women's wage labour to address women's reproductive work, which is incorporated into their roles and work duties on the mines and subsidises for the poor wages and living conditions of male miners'.

Thus, this analysis points to the intersecting forces of patriarchy and capitalism as the root causes for the entrenched prejudices against women and their subordination in the mining sector. This viewpoint posits that 'without significant transformation of the work culture and environment, women's incorporation is generally not a liberating experience' (WoMin, 2014, p.4). Furthermore, this eco-feminist perspective of women's involvement in extractive industries underlines the link between women's rights and the rights of nature⁴, and the ways in which women's ascribed role as natural caregivers and nurturers puts them at the forefront of struggles to protect the environment and Nature against the oppression of the male-dominated and intertwined patriarchal, capitalist and extractivist systems.



4 Established in the Cochabamba Declaration adopted by thousands of the world's citizens in Bolivia on 8 December 2000 and the Ecuadorian Constitution in 2008, recognises the Earth and its numerous ecosystems as "a living being with inalienable rights: to exist, to live free of cruel treatment, to maintain vital processes necessary for the harmonious balance that supports all life. Such laws also recognize the authority of people, communities, and governments to defend those rights".



The gendered impacts of extractivism on women's rights

- Impacts on land, livelihoods and food sovereignty:

The extractive industries are highly disruptive and can impact women's rights in many ways. Large-scale mining negatively impacts rural women's land rights and their access to control over and use of natural resources. It also hinders their access to and control over the necessary labour force (including their own labour) for food production. In many rural contexts, women oversee food production for their families' consumption and income; hence, women are typically those most affected by expropriation of the land where they live and

work for extractive projects. Unless women are awarded replacement land of equal size and productivity, they will lose their livelihoods together with the food sovereignty for their families. But in most cases, replacement land of the same quality is not made available to women. Similarly, compensation for land is typically awarded to male heads of households (Oxfam International, 2017). Moreover, when agricultural land is no longer available, and/or soil and water sources are depleted or polluted, women's work burden is likely to increase in order to earn a decent income. In many instances, 'women may even be forced to resort to employment that is abusive or exploitative, or that pushes them into poverty, such as commercial sex work' (Oxfam International, 2017).

- Impacts on women's bodies, sexuality, health and

safety: While the literature on the relationship between women, sex, sexuality and extractivism tends to focus overwhelmingly on sex work, it is important to underline that the latter impacts women's ability to make safe and informed choices about their bodies, their health and their sexuality (WoMin, 2014). In many countries, the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections, HIV and

AIDS are found in communities neighbouring large-scale extractive projects. For the health, safety and security of women and girls in the affected communities, the economic and social changes brought about by those projects are associated with specific risk factors related to 'migration and migratory status; economic booms and busts, and consequent economic stress on the poor; and the particular construction of masculinity in the mines' (WoMin, 2014, p.5).

This is evidenced in the increased rates of violence against women and girls, as well as the marked rise in alcoholism, sexual abuse and harassment, and domestic violence linked to large-scale extractive operations. In some cases, sexual abuse - including rape - perpetrated by security forces hired by extractive companies have also been reported (Oxfam International, 2017).



-Impacts on women's unpaid care work: Unpaid care refers to the domestic work performed, mostly by women, to reproduce the labour power of household and community members, such as cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood and water, and looking after children and the elderly. Even though the costs of extractive industries are disproportionately externalized onto women through their unpaid work that supports the social reproduction of mining capital, this work is not recognised, counted, remunerated or valued in the mining sector and the economic realm alike.

Extractive operations increase the amount of time and energy spent on women's unpaid care work, as natural resources such as water and wood become depleted. When local water sources become polluted, the women and girls who are typically responsible for its provision must travel farther distances. Polluted water sources can also lead to chronic diseases among family members, thereby increasing their care needs. Furthermore, as women's time poverty increases with the time spent on unpaid care work, their inability to engage in paid work further increases economic pressures on families, together with women's financial dependence on men within the households.

- Impacts on gender power relations and women's autonomy: As mentioned above, the impact of extractive industries on women's time poverty, where they have limited employment opportunities and men are the primary earners, is increased economic dependence on men, coupled with further marginalisation for women in household decision-making. Extractivist projects tend to shift the balance of gender power relations against women's autonomy and to reinforce the structural constraints that account for their marginalisation in decision-making and disempowerment at household and community levels. In the public sphere, the typical absence of women in consultations and decision-making processes related to extractive projects reflects these persistent inequalities in gender power relations and women's lack of political voice.



4. Towards alternatives to the extractivist system⁵

The predominance of the neoliberal development paradigm and the expansion of the Commodities Consensus in African countries have imposed the widespread vision that economic growth is a sine qua non for progress and development, and that the increasing extraction of natural resources is required to respond to an ever-growing global demand. In this context, the deepening global ecological crisis points to the unsustainable transgression of the limits of nature by the extractivist mode of accumulation that has generated a host of social and political crises, like the unabated migration flows from African countries to the centers of the capitalist system, extreme violence and wars over the control of strategic natural resources.

Most importantly, the extractivist development model has clear inequalities along class, race, and gender lines. It perpetuates the exploitation of nature and the majority of disenfranchised African people for the benefit of offshore tax havens and a handful of politicians and business people⁶. All these realities suggest the urgent need to escape the extractivism 'trap' (Acosta, 2014) and to take up the pressing challenge of a new development paradigm that respects both human rights and the rights of nature, and that can ensure economic, ecological, social and gender justice.

Existing initiatives and building blocks

The key issue at hand is how to ensure equitable development for all, while overcoming dependency on extractive industries and ensuring that natural resources are protected for future generations. This is obviously a very complex issue that requires us to simultaneously address environmental issues and pressing social problems - such as poverty - whilst moving towards a post-extractivist economic model.

Overcoming extractivism requires confronting multiple social, economic and environmental problems in the short and longer term, which implies first and foremost, a clear understanding of the workings of the extractivist system. Such an understanding already allows us to realize that 'just as no country alone can overcome climate change, no country alone will be able to overcome extractivism' (Acosta, 2014). In other words, fighting against extractivism requires actions in both the global South and North. This understanding also helps us to target the main culprits of extractivism in African countries - the governments of capitalist centers and TNCs based in the global North - and to identify the existing initiatives/campaigns that focus on these and have the potential to support resource-rich African countries to move their economies away from extractivism.

- **Demanding climate justice:** As discussed in previous sections, climate change is a direct result of extractivism. Therefore, strengthening campaigns for climate justice is critical to the process of reducing extraction and overcoming extractivism, because this allows to directly target the main culprits of climate change in African countries, and make very concrete demands of them for the transfer of technology and funding that are imperative to lift African economies out of

⁵ This section draws on the discussions of the Feminist Labs and the experiences of members of the Feminist Reflection and Action Group. Especially on the contributions and the work of the international feminist network World March of Women represented through Marianna Fernandes. Also see Fernandes, 2018.

⁶ See Acosta, 2014: While in 2010, 388 people had accumulated the same amount of wealth as more than half of the global population (ca. 3.500 million people), by 2015 this number had fallen to 62 people according to an Oxfam (2016) report. According to this same source, the riches in the hands of these 62 richest people had increased by 44 per cent; in only five years, the wealth in the hands of the poorest half of the population fell by more than a billion dollars, plummeting by 41 per cent.



the extractivist trap. Additionally, campaigns focusing on climate justice can also help forge links with other people who are struggling with the environmental, social and economic consequences of extractivism. This will be key to forging solidarity and combining the strength of global social movements against extractivism.

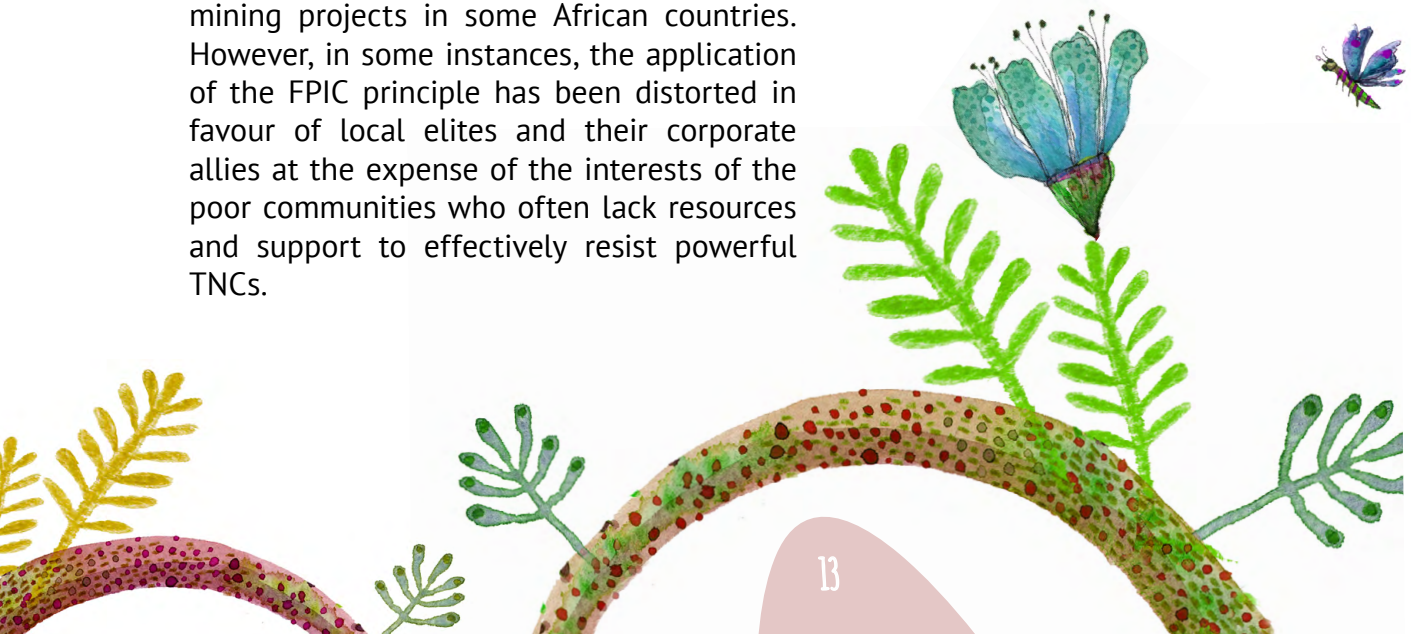
- Ensuring Free Prior and Informed Consent

(FPIC): Communities facing the multiple issues connected to extractivism need support in claiming their right to self-determined development and other substantive community rights. In this regard, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a legal instrument that protects those rights; notably the right of the concerned communities to be consulted about planned mining activities and/or other development projects affecting their lands and natural resources prior to any realization thereof and the right to take a decision based on provided access to objective information, which is free from any obligation, duty, force or coercion.

The FPIC principle is used by many activists and human rights defenders in the context of extractive and mega-infrastructure projects. From a feminist perspective, it is particularly important for women, as emphasised by the Women in Mining Alliance (WoMin), who implements a project to strengthen and bring women's voice in the decision-making process on issues related to land acquisition for big mining projects in some African countries. However, in some instances, the application of the FPIC principle has been distorted in favour of local elites and their corporate allies at the expense of the interests of the poor communities who often lack resources and support to effectively resist powerful TNCs.

- Demanding the "Right to say No": The loopholes mentioned above in the application of the FPIC principle show that it is not enough. Hence, the promotion of the 'Right to say No' concept that builds on the FPIC concept, which goes further to affirm the rights of affected communities to say NO to proposals from TNCs when they are not satisfied with negotiation outcomes. As such, the 'Right to say No' gives communities a greater voice and puts them in a more equitable position in the negotiating processes, while putting pressure on TNCs to respect indigenous and customary rights.

The iconic case of the Amadiba Crisis Committee of Pondoland in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa provides a powerful testimony of the effective realisation of the 'Right to say No'. This community rejected extractivism and came up with its own development alternatives, namely ecotourism and renewable energy projects. Thus, it is important to note that the right to say 'No' to mining is therefore also the right to say 'Yes' to a self-determined living and gives communities a concrete instrument to come up with their own development model through grassroots processes and law from below (Acosta, 2014).





How does a sustainable development model that is socially and gender just look ?⁷

The search for alternatives to the extractive development model is premised on a process of progressive transformation that involves multiple dimensions and frames the conceptualization of a sustainable development paradigm that upholds social and gender justice, as well as human rights and the rights of nature. Therefore, the point of departure is that such a multidimensional social transformation should address simultaneously the complex relations between class, race, colonialism/imperialism, gender, and Nature, as it is precisely their historical intersections and interdependencies that have shaped the dominant economic system.

- *An alternative vision of the economy:* First and foremost, there is need to de-bunk the myths and misrepresentations that frame the mainstream vision of the economy, whereby it operates in a social and ecological vacuum according to a model that ignores energy, materials, the natural world, the commons, human society, power, and women's unpaid care work without which no economy could function.

⁷ This session draws from the discussion of the second Idea Lab of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group, Uganda Mai 2018. See also: Fernandes, M. (2018): Feminist Alternatives to the Predatory Extractivist Model: Experiences from Latin America, Feminist Dialogue Series

The dominant extractivist model is built on key assumptions that have proved to bear little relationship to reality:

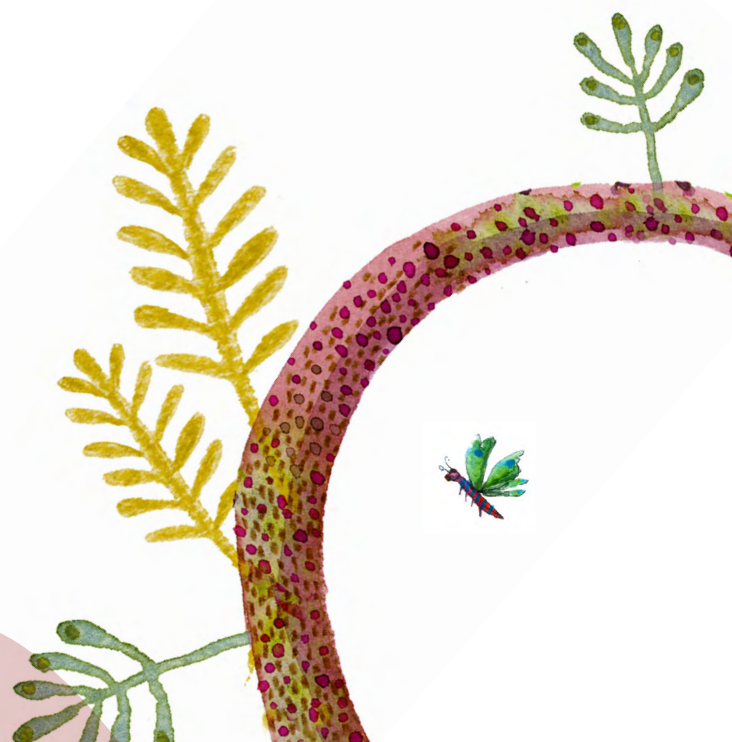
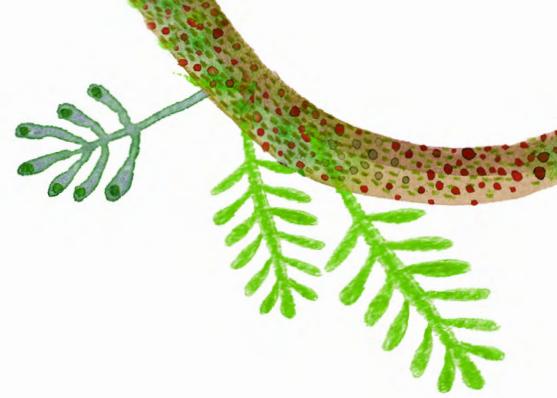
- The scientific and technological domination of Nature, which is essentially considered as an unlimited pool of “natural resources” to be exploited and commodified;
- The existence of the “rational economic man” (*homo oeconomicus*), as a profit-maximizing, individualistic, and isolated human whose well-being depends on the accumulation of material goods;
- The conception of the economy as a closed cycle driven by the logic of profit and incorporating only monetised relations and activities carried out on the market;
- The goal of unlimited growth as the pillar of social and economic organization.

Thus, an alternative vision of economic activity should be about ‘meeting the needs of all within the means of the planet’, instead of endless growth at all costs. We need economic systems that “make us thrive, whether or not they grow”, and help us enter that “ecologically safe and socially just space” in which humanity can enjoy ‘a sufficiency of the resources we need to lead a good life: food, clean water, housing, sanitation, energy, education, healthcare, democracy’- real well-being (Raworth, 2017 cited by Monbiot G., 2017). In addition to the need to embed the economy in our planet's systems and in society, we must also remind ourselves that ‘the economy is much more than what is sold on the market’, as evidenced in “the economic activities of rural women, which often involve ‘practices such as donations, exchanges and production for self-consumption’ (Sempreviva Organização Feminista [SOF] 2018, p.17), and that ‘we are more than just workers, consumers and owners of capital’ (Monbiot, 2017).

- *An alternative conceptual framework:* As mentioned above, the conceptual framework for an alternative development paradigm is holistic and multidimensional. The various dimensions pertain to critical transformative processes that address the commodifying, patriarchal, colonial, and destructive logics of the prevailing extractivist system. This includes relations of domination and inequalities based on race and class.

Thus, the main dimensions of an alternative conceptual framework contain:

- The de-commodification of vital elements of life and human rights, such as land, water, housing, and essential social services. This implies that demanding these elements should no longer be subjected to marketized profit logics and that their purpose should be re-directed at capacity to ensure sustainable social reproduction.
- The transformation of societal relations with Nature, which have become increasingly instrumental and predatory since the colonial primitive accumulation period and intensified during neoliberal globalization as well as under the current Commodities Consensus era. There is an urgent need to eliminate the accelerated destruction of Nature and livelihoods and to stop the rising securitisation trend in the face of ecological problems that are increasingly considered security issues requiring violent and military solutions.
- The transformation of unequal gender relations, which means overcoming patriarchy in all its existing forms in the different contexts, in relation to the sexual division of labour - both reproductive and productive work -, representation, decision-making, etc.
- The establishment of more equitable social relations, including a new focus on re-distribution, an increased engagement to address class inequalities and destabilizing hegemonic forces, along with State and corporate strategies for capital accumulation that intensify the concentration of wealth in the hands of a privileged minority.
- The eradication of discriminatory/racist relations and practices. In many African societies, racism and discrimination are structural elements of the extractivism system, which cannot reproduce itself without these forms of domination and inequalities that affect indigenous and black people disproportionately, especially women.
- The generation of a specific body of knowledge geared for progressive social transformation. As such, this process includes not only the relevant Western/science-based and expert knowledge, most importantly, it includes the production of theories and proposals based on the experiences and struggles of women and social movements.



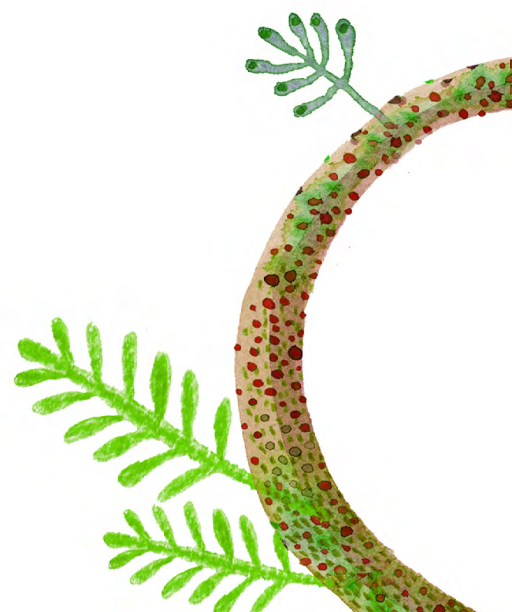
- **Feminist economic alternatives**⁸: Feminist economics posits that all the unpaid daily work continuously done by women in the domestic sphere and in community spaces is vital to the production of life as well as to the economy's function. Ensuring quality of life is at the center of the feminist economic alternatives based on the principles of equality, redistribution of tasks, solidarity and reciprocity (SOF, 2018, p.17). In addition, feminist economics highlights the social construction of markets, thereby pointing to the pervasive relations of inequality therein, and contesting the view that the market is 'self-regulated... and adjusts on its own to work in a way that benefits both the buyer and the producer' (p.26). Building women's economic autonomy and self-esteem is another central goal of feminist economics, which is at odds with supporting women's integration in the market as it is organised today in order to generate income.

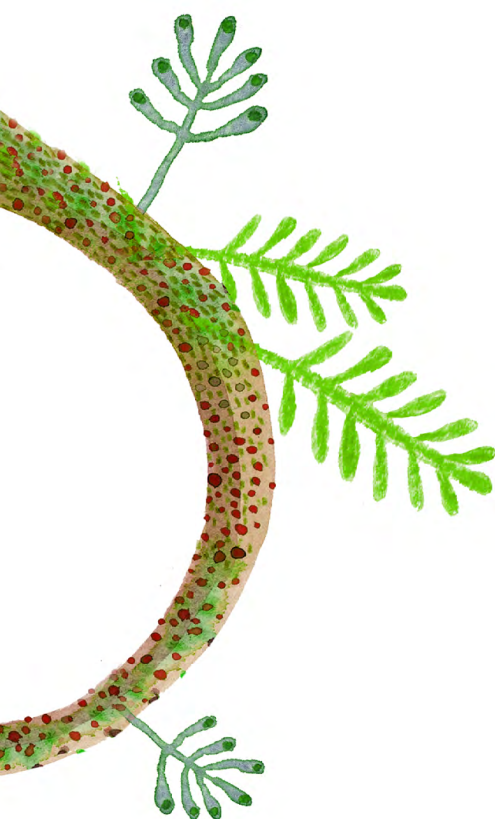
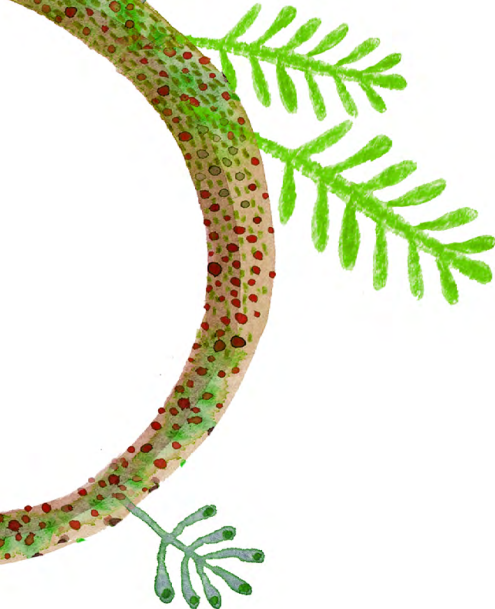
In this regard, the practical experience in working with rural women from the Vale do Ribeira region in Brazil suggests that one avenue to achieving this is to establish the women's control over access to markets and their income, based on:

1. Organising collectively to increase women's sales capacity and power to negotiate;
2. The diversification of sales venues to avoid dependency on only a few clients; and
3. Improving access to key information (prices, amounts, sales conditions) to avoid dependency on intermediaries (Hillenkamp and Nobre, 2016, cited in SOF, 2018, p.29).

Moreover, building women's economic autonomy depends on the capacity to build political communities of change where existing internal power relations as well as external mechanisms that perpetuate oppression are collectively analyzed and addressed.

⁸ For a discussion on feminist alternatives to predatory extractivism, see also Fernandes, M. (2018) *Feminist Alternatives to Predatory Extractivism: Contributions and Experiences from Latin America*, Feminist Dialogue Series, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Maputo, Mozambique.





These political communities of change should be made up of autonomous women's groups that would build alliances with other social movements engaged in bringing about progressive change. This experience with rural women from the Vale do Ribeira region also points to the daily challenges that women face in putting all the above principles and aspirations into practice, particularly 'in connecting our resistance and local struggles to the broader processes that are responsible for inequalities all over the world' (SOF, 2018, p.15).

For example, what we are seeing in Brazil is that women who fight to defend their territories are up against: the power of transnational corporations - mainly from the mining and agribusiness sectors; the power of the state, via the police or the judiciary that favours the elites and increasingly criminalises the peoples' struggles; violence against women, which is used in conflicts to humiliate women or discourage them from fighting (SOF 2018, p.16).

- *Putting feminist economic alternatives into practice:* Several generic elements of economic transformation are already clear, such as the strengthening of local networks of production and consumption; the promotion of circular economies (in which energy and materials are circulated continuously in different ways, to avoid waste); the promotion of sustainable products; and the definancialization of economies. The following examples have been selected because of their relevance from both a feminist and post-extractivist perspective⁹.



9 More detailed information on these examples can be found in SOF Sempre Viva Organização Feminista (Sempre Viva Feminist Organisation) 2018, *Feminist Practices for Economic Change. Women's autonomy and agroecology in the Vale do Ribeira region*. São Paulo.

Agroecology

Agroecology is the 'application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems' (Gliessman and Siliprandi, 2015, cited in SOF, 2018, p.18). As such, it responds to the need for 'a kind of agriculture that is integrated into nature's cycles and, at the same time, ensures that people have access to nutritional and healthy food that is part of their food culture' (SOF 2018, p.19). While restoring the diversity and self-sufficiency of ecosystems, agroecology is a transition process that aims to ensure balanced and sustainable systems.

In this process, the struggle for land is fundamental and embraces the fight for agrarian reform in both rural and urban areas, together with the recognition of traditional peoples' territories and women's leading role in building knowledge collectively through exchanges of experiences and dialogue (SOF, 2018). Most importantly, women engaged in agroecology in Brazil underline its close ties with feminism. As SOF states:

Feminism dialogues with agroecology because both movements fight for a more just society. We cannot construct agroecology as long as gender inequality exists. Unfortunately, even our comrades in the struggle for agroecology often do not understand the importance of feminism for achieving equality (SOF 2018, p. 22).

There is no point producing without poisonous chemicals and then going home and being beat up by your husband. If agroecology fights for a life with dignity, then all rights have to be equal. Poison is a kind of violence against the land, the plants, our health. And sexism is poison in the families. That is why it is important for us to build collectively, while introducing feminism into the dialogue in the family (SOF 2018, p. 22).

Solidarity economy enterprises

Essentially, the goals of the solidarity economy, from a feminist perspective, are to over-

come the injustices based on class, race and gender and to counter the hegemonic forces of capitalism and patriarchy by changing the organisation of economic relations in society based on real possibilities and creating spaces of freedom and experimentation through collective processes. The construction of a social market that reduces inequalities, 'values the work invested in production and allows for diversified and conscious consumption' (SOF, 2018, p. 27) is an integral part of these processes.

In Brazil, solidarity economy enterprises (Empreendimentos de Economia Solidária [EES]) are not organised only to involve people who are marginalised/excluded from the formal labour market, but also those who are willing to build alternative ways of organising the economy. The typology of solidarity economy enterprises comprises family farmers' cooperatives, recuperated factories or seamstress cooperatives in the production sector; services such as community kitchens, elderly caregivers' cooperatives, cultural activities, conscious consumer groups and solid waste recycling; financial services including credit cooperatives, revolving funds and solidarity currency initiatives; and solidarity trade fairs (SOF, 2018).

One of the main characteristics of the solidarity economy is self-management, which involves 'collective ownership or possession of the means of production (land, buildings and equipment), defining standards and agreements on how to function collectively, transparency and the democratic participation of all people involved in decisions' (SOF, 2018, p. 23).

Women are the majority who participate in the EES, but they are not always visible due to persistent gender biases in the registration of EES members. Women working in EESs value the non-monetary and relational aspects of their participation as much as their financial returns. The survey results revealed that 'in general, EES participants feel stronger, valued and have higher self-esteem thanks to the recognition of their knowledge and their capacity to innovate with limited resources' (SOF 2018, p. 24).

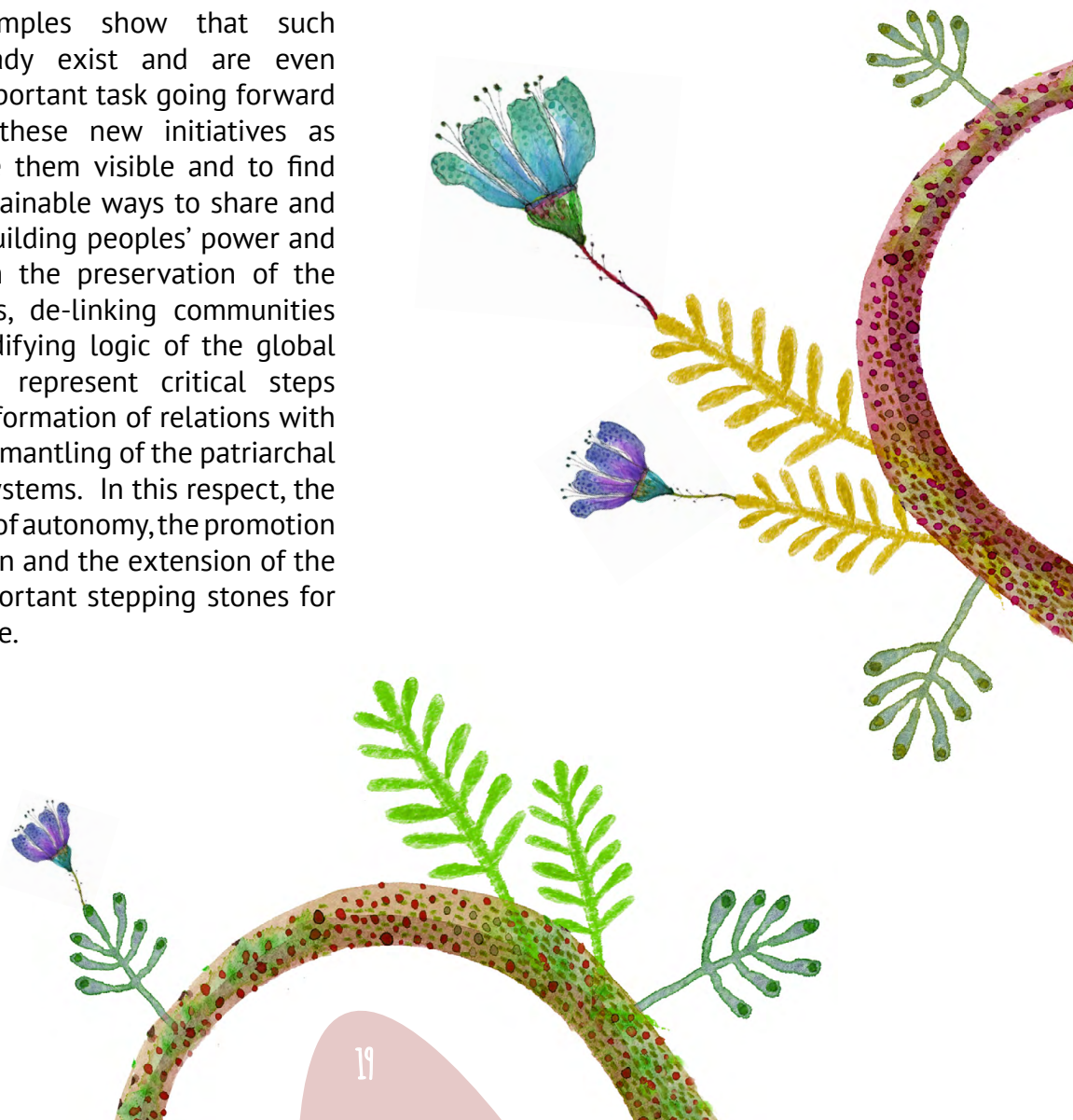
5. Conclusion: Beyond the extractivist development model

This discussion paper is not meant to be the final word about the alternatives to the dominant extractivist development model. Its main purpose is to provide an analytical framework that can help build a common ground for the Idea Lab's debates on extractivism and allow participants to engage in the production of collective perspectives and knowledge on alternatives to the extractivist system that can ensure social and gender justice. In conclusion, it clearly appears that genuine alternatives need to emerge from social movements, peoples, communities, and women specifically, based on their lived realities, developmental practices and aspirations that promote emancipatory and multidimensional change.

The above examples show that such alternatives already exist and are even practiced. One important task going forward is to recognize these new initiatives as valuable, to make them visible and to find effective and sustainable ways to share and scale them up. Building peoples' power and solidarity through the preservation of the existing commons, de-linking communities from the commodifying logic of the global capitalist market represent critical steps towards the transformation of relations with Nature and the dismantling of the patriarchal and extractivist systems. In this respect, the creation of spaces of autonomy, the promotion of self-organization and the extension of the commons are important stepping stones for progressive change.

Such a long-term multidimensional transformation will require strong political struggles for the creation of new institutions, along with new modes of production, practices of distribution, and consumption habits. Because 'the personal is political', the struggles must also bring about self-consciousness and new ways of being through profound cultural change in our own personal practices of consumption, of relating to each other and to Nature, desires and habits.

Last but not least, in the context of a globalized economy, our struggles are more interdependent than ever before. This means that ending the destruction of livelihoods through extractivism in resource-rich African countries crucially depends on effective social transformation in the global North and vice versa ■



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The “Feminist Reflections” Series share valuable discourse emerging from the collective work of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group. The group is composed of 40 feminist academics, social activists and progressive women from trade unions and in the political arena from diverse regions of the African continent. Since November 2017, the group regularly met to engage in critical debates around the challenges that derive from neoliberal development patterns and current political backlashes against women for contemporary African feminist activism. The gatherings have been facilitated by the Mozambique office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

About the Author

Zo Randriamaro is a feminist and human rights activist and researcher from Madagascar. She is a sociologist by training and has published several papers on gender, economic, trade and global governance issues. She has served as an expert on these issues for international development organisations, including the major United Nations agencies. She is the founder and Coordinator of the Research and Support Center for Development Alternatives – Indian Ocean (RSCDA-IO/CRAAD-OI), and the Independent Observatory for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Madagascar. She is also the Chair of the Board of Fahamu Africa, a Pan-African organisation committed to human rights and social justice, and an Associate of the international network Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN).

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Published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Mozambique
Av. Tomás Nduda 1212, Maputo, Mozambique
Tel.: 258 21 491231 | Fax.: +258 21 490286
Email: info@fes-mozambique.org | www.fes-mozambique.org
© Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2018
ISBN: 978-989-54223-2-6
Design - João Athayde e Melo | Illustration - Ruth Bañon

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