

Panel at LASA Congress 2022

Title: A “Green Deal” for who? The promises and pitfalls of sustainable EU-LAC commodity chains in the wake of global transformations

Conference Track: "Extraction and Appropriation of Multinationals and State"

Historically, the relationship between raw material producers and consumers has been highly asymmetrical, with the costs and benefits of commodity production being distributed unequally. While many economies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) continue to depend on commodity exports, newly emerging markets have reinvigorated efforts in the region to develop national industries and diversify exports. Meanwhile, consumer-driven sustainability policies and standards have emerged to alter the conditions of commodity production and address its negative social and environmental impacts. In particular, with its “Green Deal” the European Union (EU) has defined highly ambitious goals to support member states and partner regions such as LAC in transforming industries and reversing environmental degradation. These recent developments promise to transform the economically and ecologically unequal relationship between the two regions.

In this panel, we question this promise by combining insights from political economy and ecology analysis to discuss how sustainability policies and standards shape, and take shape in, commodity chains between LAC and EU. For example, the large lithium resources in LAC have gained strategic importance for EU efforts to manufacture the world’s “greenest” batteries to reform its energy and transport systems and secure a future for its industries in the face of fierce competition with Asian battery producers. Similarly, the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement is currently running the risk of breaking down because it has failed to systematically include sustainability standards for agricultural commodities, such as soy. These examples raise questions that we propose to address in this panel. How have policies and standards for sustainable commodity production and trade between the EU and LAC evolved? How do they shape, and take shape in, negotiations between diverse actors, such as local communities, companies, investors, policymakers, or consumer organizations? How do such negotiations affect how decisions are taken along commodity chains between the EU and LAC? How does this transform the relationship between the regions?

Session Organisers: Dr. Anna Barrera Vivero, EU-LAC Foundation & Jonas Köppel, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies - IHEID)

Chair: Diego Silva, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

Discussant: Prof. Barbara Göbel, Ibero-American Institute Berlin (IAI)

Part 1: 5 May 2022, 21:00-22:00 CEST

Panellists:

Diana Raquel Vela Almeida, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Greening cognitive empire: The European Green Deal as political foreclosure of alternative world ecologies

Thea Riofrancos, Providence College
The Security-Sustainability Nexus: Statecraft, Capital, and Protest Along the Global Lithium Frontier

Ana Carballo, University of Melbourne

'It is a big dream, they say': Imaginaries of Energy transition in the Lithium Mining Industry

Ramón Morales Balcázar, Autonomous Metropolitan University

From extractivism to responsible mining: mirages in the Atacama Desert

Morgan Scoville-Simonds, Centre for International Environmental Studies, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Dreams, realities, or recurring nightmares? Comparing battery sociotechnical imaginaries between Latin America and Europe

Jonas Köppel, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID)

Dreams, realities, or recurring nightmares? Comparing battery sociotechnical imaginaries between Latin America and Europe

Part 2: 5 May 2022, 23:00-00:30 CEST

Panellists:

Marc Hufty, Graduate Institute of International and Development

Martín Obaya, CONICET – Escuela de Economía y Negocios – Universidad Nacional de San Martín
The Power of the Norm. Can a new European Battery Directive lead to the virtuous governance of the lithium commodity chain?

Maria-Therese Gustafsson, Stockholm University

Reducing or enhancing climate vulnerability? The governing of climate risks in the Peruvian mining sector

Carla Rodas Arano, The Graduate Institute Geneva

Las leyes no bastan: el futuro riesgoso del Green Deal y la explotación minera en áreas protegidas de Bolivia

David Schröter, Université de Lausanne

Strategic Alliances or a return to Neoliberal Entreguismo? Foreign-national partnerships in Bolivian Lithium Extraction