

The Dark Side of Sustainability and Uneven Global Development: Interlinking IR, Area Studies and Development Research

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Although the term “sustainability” is irrevocably entering the international political agenda, it does so selectively. Despite aiming for social change, sustainability as a project is still mainly concentrated on the Global North. Circular economies, recycling, e-mobility and energy transitions are hypothesized and materialized mainly within developed countries and then projected to the rest of the world. Conversely, non-sustainable activities, particularly raw materials extraction, are the most accessible path towards development in the Global South. While resource endowments conventionally resulted in growth traps, internal inequalities, and subordinated international positions, exploiting resource abundance to support equitable progress is still mainly a consensus among policymakers in developing countries. That brings us to the unavoidable (and uncomfortable) predicament of the “**dark side of sustainability**.” Whichever path the sustainability discourse chooses to follow, it must address the challenges it produces as a globalized and unequal project today.

On the one hand, climate change and global warming force us to rethink how we use and distribute natural resources globally. On the other hand, the supply and access to such resources are uneven, translating into different development trajectories in the Global South, many that do not conform to expectations for a greener future. *What will happen to the countries without a leading role in the global sustainability discussion? What are the development venues for those not accessing green technology and dependent on non-eco-friendly revenue activities? What are the geopolitical consequences of an exogenous push towards sustainability in world regions that traditionally depend on non-renewable resources? Suppose the Global North were to decide against the use of fossil fuels, what would be the drawbacks in countries like Venezuela, Algeria, or Qatar concerning the viability of their socio-economic models and foreign relations patterns? Finally, how can endogenous discourses of sustainability from the Global South respond to the double edge-sword of finding outcomes that push for development while assuring greener alternatives, considering the constraints of their peripheral position on the international division of labor?*

International Relations (IR), Development Studies, and Area Studies propose different answers to these questions. While mainstream IR often finds answers via ahistorical structural models, Area Studies tend to highlight the role of contingency and intra-area specific culture, reducing venues for comparison. Conversely, Development Studies have turned towards culturalist variables in recent decades, yet still grappling with its Eurocentric origins and approaches. Thus, the three fields struggle to find an integrative analysis of development trajectories that situates the issue of sustainability simultaneously in the context of social-economic relations of production, regimes of power, and the international system.

Without intense interdisciplinary debate, we argue that the fields will continue to constrain the space for building concepts concerning **development trajectories and sustainability** that link the international and the domestic. Ultimately, we argue that more interdisciplinary interchange is vital to tackle the pressing – however understated – issue of the dark side of sustainability. Bridging the gap between these three fields can recalibrate them towards fruitful new arguments, concepts, and ideas, bringing theory, methods, and empirical knowledge back into inter/trans-disciplinary discussions.

Themes and Topics

This workshop aims to bring together approaches from IR, Development Studies and Area Studies interested in a cross-area and interdisciplinary dialogue. The goal is to create a forum for de-Westernizing Science and expand our knowledge about the dark side of sustainability and case-specific, regional and/or global trajectories of development.

Thus, we are particularly interested in the following issues related to the dark sides of sustainability:

- Analysis of the dark sides and uneven global development.
- Comparative approaches to trajectories of development.
- Interconnectivity between domestic and international factors shaping sustainability.
- The interdependency between North and South in an increasingly globalized environment.
- Critical approaches towards global sustainability as a Global North project and its alternatives.

The workshop will be tentatively divided into the following themes:

1. Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Dark Sides of Sustainability and Uneven Global Development

So far, IR, Development Studies and Area Studies have struggled to engage in a joint discussion about their methodological and theoretical (in)congruencies and how to produce new and critical arguments about global processes and their local materializations. This theme engages in such a discussion and aims at bringing together heterodox approaches to the dark sides of sustainability and the dynamics of uneven global development. The workshop is interested in papers addressing externalities and problematic consequences of the drive towards sustainability in the Global North and its impact on the Global South. How can we theorize this sustainability trap? What are the possible consequences for societies and states locked within this trap and for the international system as a whole? This theme concerns papers that explicitly underscore and build theoretical approaches as well as comparative methodologies. Which are the paradigmatic and crucial cases? How can we analyze and compare them?

2. Interconnectivity between domestic and international factors shaping the sustainability

This theme turns the lenses to the Global South and focuses on the many ways of perceiving and reacting to global sustainability. We are looking for papers that explore how developing countries, particularly those linked with extractivism and natural resource rents, balance their ambitions to deliver social-economic progress with the exogenous pressure from the global sustainability discourse. Do these countries perceive a new type of global inequality and exclusion? Which alternatives are emerging in the Global South, and how do they engage or compete with the Global North? Are class dynamics and state-society relations being affected by the ambitions to turn towards a greener economy? We are interested in issues concerning the social relations of production and how this plays out on the configuration of positions in the international order. Papers related to processes of state-society contestation and competitive projects for development in the broader framing of the international system are also welcomed.

3. The interdependency between North and South in an increasingly globalized environment

This theme focuses on the geopolitical (wanted and unwanted) consequences of sustainability. A shift towards a greener economy or a more sustainable development means undoubtedly adjustments to international relations and geopolitical patterns. However, which patterns change, and which remain

the same? We seek papers offering historical analysis concerning trajectories of development that combine international, sociological, and economic aspects. For example, the production, supply, and distribution of raw materials in a growing context of scarcity can be employed as determining factors in foreign policy, security issues and global economic cartels. How are interdependency, inequality, and specialization produced, reproduced, and maintained in the international division of labor? Can a race for greener development trajectories generate geopolitical competition, alter alliances, or provoke inter-state conflicts? Moreover, we seek papers that offer multifactorial explanations exploring the interconnectivity between the domestic and international concerning development trajectories – in terms of space, positionality, and time. Also, interconnectivity should raise questions about class division and its internationalized nature, considering that domestic power structures are embedded in many complex global power relations.

4. Learning from the past, planning for a transdisciplinary future.

A key argument of this workshop is that the three fields working with the topic – IR, Development Studies, and Area Studies – are far from their potential concerning intellectual exchange. Improving this cross-discipline exchange is essential to reach innovative theories, methods, and concepts that comprehensively and inclusively tackle these dark sides of sustainability. We part from the principle that there is still the tendency within IR debates to overlook economic asymmetries and differences within agencies concerning uneven global development. Furthermore, IR tends towards parsimony and Western cases, leading to the universalization of very specific development trajectories. In contrast, Area Studies often ignore the weight of global processes and how they affect intra-area contexts. Finally, Development Studies finds itself in the middle of this Area vs. Discipline dilemma and has so far failed to guide both IR and Area Studies towards a common ground that takes advantage of its own valuable terms and concepts. Thus, with this final theme, we look for metatheoretical discussions about interconnecting these fields, exploring the links, the gaps, and the miscommunications present in the literature.

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Dr. Hannes Warnecke-Berger is a senior researcher at the University of Kassel and the coordinator of the project Extractivism.de, from the University of Kassel and the University of Marburg, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Today, his research concerns connecting Development Studies and Political Economy in countries that depend on the extractivist social-economic development model. His further interests related to North-South relations, development theory, rents, and migration. He has led research projects on migration and remittances, as well as on violence and development. Moreover, he has worked within the Collaborative Research Center 1199 “Spatialization Processes under Conditions of Globalization” at the University of Leipzig. He received his doctorate with a thesis about the different forms of violence in Central America and the Caribbean at the University of Leipzig. In addition, he studied Political Science, Law and Sociology at the University of Leipzig and Institut d’Etudes Politiques, Science Po – Bordeaux.

- **Recent publications:**

Warnecke-Berger, H. and Ickler, J. (Eds.) **Political Economy of Extractivism. Global Perspectives on the Seduction of Rent.** New York; London: Routledge (*forthcoming*).

Warnecke-Berger, H. (Ed.) (2021), **Development, Capitalism, and Rent: The Political Economy of Hartmut Elsenhans**, Palgrave Macmillan.

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Pisarz-Ramirez, G. and Warnecke-Berger, H. (Eds.) (2018), **Processes of Spatialization in the Americas: Configurations and Narratives**, Peter Lang.

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Luíza Cerioli is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the collaborative research project *Extractivism.de* at the University of Kassel. She focuses on International Relations of the Middle East and foreign policy of the Global South. She now expands her research towards the possibilities of transnational cross-comparison of critical concepts and categories of rentier societies in Latin America and the Middle East, particularly on the cases of Brazil, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. She focuses on the interconnections between the domestic and the international concerning the extractivist model of social-economic development. She has submitted her dissertation in Political Science at the Centre for Near and Middle East Studies (CNMS) at the University of Marburg. Her Ph.D. thesis develops a nuanced theoretical framework of International Relations to cope with the complexity of studying multifaced relations between the three states in a more extended period of time. She holds an International Relations and Comparative Foreign Policy Masters from the University of Brasília (UnB). She is interested in IR theories, Middle Eastern geopolitics, Global South relations, Global IR, and the intersections between identity, ideology and gender within IR. Finally, she is an academic member of BRaS (Brazilian Research and Study Center) and a research fellow at SEPAD (Sectarianism, Proxies and De-sectarianisation).

- **Recent publications:**

Cerioli, L. **Neoclassical Realism as a path for growing collaboration across Middle East's International Relations and Area Studies.** In E. Wastnigde, F. Belcastro (Eds.), *International Relations in a Multipolar Middle East*. Manchester University Press (*forthcoming*).

Cerioli, L. **Neoclassical Realism and Grand Strategy Reassessment: the promotion of Saudi Arabia's regional leadership after the 2003 Iraqi War.** Accepted for publication in *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* (*forthcoming*).

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