

Report

EnJust Network for Environmental Justice

International conference on environmental justice and violence in Chiapas, Mexico

The EnJust Network was founded at Kiel University in 2019 to raise awareness of environmental justice issues and strengthen the democratic participation of those affected by environmental problems. The aim is to bring together actors from science, planning and civil society and to initiate communication spaces and collaborative research.

The fourth annual international conference on "Environmental Justice and Violence: Resistances, Articulations, and Intersections" took place from 3 to 6 October 2023. It was organised by the EnJust Network for Environmental Justice in cooperation with CIESAS (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social), CIMSUR-UNAM (Centro de investigaciones Multidisciplinarias sobre Chiapas y Centroamérica - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), FCPys-UNAM (Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and Kiel University.

Around 75 participants from Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, the USA, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Finland, the UK and Sweden came together online or in person. The conference was held at CIMSUR-UNAM's rooms and a special place for the conference, the Moxviquil Education Centre for Sustainability. The centre hosts exchanges between local and regional initiatives that deal with the topic of sustainability. The focus is on offering alternative educational programmes on issues of social and environmental justice for young people with limited financial resources. This special location created a space for the conference in which knowledge exchange could be encouraged and the local could be linked with the international in close practical relevance.

On the day before the official start of the conference, the first joint social activity was the screening of the documentary film *Río Negro* (Black River), which deals with the problem of sewage pollution in Mexico City. This and many other activities at the conference were open to the public. To kick off the conference, the values of the EnJust network were presented as the basis of the meeting: Horizontality, respectful dialogue and rejection of any form of discrimination or exclusion.

The keynote speech at the conference was given by Prof. Dr. Diana Ojeda (Indiana University) on the topic "Placing Life at the Center: Environmental Justice and Violence from a Feminist Latin American Political Ecology Perspective". A Blue Justice Hybrid Session was also held in cooperation with the University of Bremen and the Kellner-Stoll Foundation. Thematic sessions dealt with the following topics in the form of short presentations and subsequent discussion:

- Sessions 1 and 4 on territory, dispossession and extractivism
- Session 2 on theoretical approaches to violence in environmental justice
- Session 3 on violence and resistance in urban and peri-urban areas
- Session 5 on social and gender inequalities in environmental justice issues
- Session 6 on environmental law, institutional violence, state injustices and necropolitics.

Overall, a high degree of diversity was represented at the conference, with different participants in terms of region, gender or academic degree. Young scientists in particular were encouraged to get involved. This was also made possible by financial support, such as the compensation of travel costs by the Internationalisation Fund of Kiel University.

New forms of collaboration have developed from the conference. For example, Ignacio Rubio Carriquiriborde and Violeta Gutierrez have developed a seminar on the sociology of space at the National University UNAM in 2024 as part of the Latin America working group. Another group, which has been in close contact since the meeting in Mexico, is working on structural and symbolic violence and environmental justice. On the initiative of Celia Ruiz de Oña Plaza and Víctor Velazquez, the Blue Justice Session is currently developing into a closer

collaboration, which will also take place in the future as part of a subgroup within the EnJust network.

In the course of 2024, a popular science publication will be published that takes up the conceptual framework of the conference. It will present current issues and key discussions, as well as a series of cases presented by the participants, dealing with the different forms of violence related to environmental justice, resistance and struggles. The regional focus is on Mexico and Latin America.

For the EnJust network as a whole, the conference in Mexico was an important step towards greater decentralisation and internationalisation. The location of the conference made it possible for local actors to share their views and experiences on the topics of environmental justice and violence on an international platform and to create synergies. The emotional and lively discussions and presentations emphasised the necessity of this conference. Even in the Latin American context, this debate is considered innovative and new in the range of conferences and events on the subject of environmental justice. At the centre of the debates were questions about the role of science in relation to activism, alternative knowledge systems and decolonial ideas in relation to environmental justice.

The focus continues to be on discussing how the network can fulfil its integrative aspirations in the future. Questions about language barriers, for example, arose in this context. For many participants, it was important to be able to express themselves in their own language - not only because of the easiness of verbal expression, but also because of the scope and depth of the talks and discussions.

The next EnJust conference will take place from 21 to 23 November 2024 in Hamburg under the title "Environmental Justice in the Age of Planetary Peril: Agencies, Strategies, Mobilizations".

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