

The Pluriverse of transitions: towards anti-colonial and insurrectional energy transformations

Call for papers POLLEN 2024, June 11-13, and Special Issue.

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Panel Description

Claims of ‘sustainability,’ ‘renewability’ and ‘energy transition’ from corporate, academic, and policy sectors are continually being debunked. Lower-carbon development projects (e.g. wind, solar, hydrological and biomass projects) are increasingly recognized for their coercive impositions (Sovacool, 2021), necessitating violence and social pacification for their construction (Dunlap, 2018a; Ulloa, 2023; Tornel, 2023a). This coercive imposition is justified by policies relying on reductive models, narrowly bounded research, severe data gaps and, consequently, misleading findings (Dunlap & Marin, 2022; Dunlap, 2023). This coincides with the documented harms of producing so-called “transition metals” (Sovacool et al., 2020; Dunlap, 2021a), which relates to quantity of materials needed, the abhorrently low recycling rates and existing levels of material-use (Bolger et al., 2021; Dunlap, 2023). Finally, ‘energy transition’ itself, despite the rapid spread of low-carbon infrastructures, is an *addition and accumulation of*, and not a transition away from, existing modalities of extractivism and the current grid energy-mixes (Franquesa, 2018; Dunlap, 2021b). The question emerges, if what is being marketed and sold as ‘sustainable’ and ‘renewable’ is not what it claims, then what actually is? This proposed panel session (and special issue) seeks to organize a collection of articles exploring real practices of socioecological sustainability and renewability.

This exploration into real sustainability, renewability or regeneration we recognize comes from the pluriverse and postdevelopment praxis (Kothari et al., 2019). In addition to looking for examples of real sustainability and renewability, or attempts working in this direction, we can reformulate this question to ask: *What does anti-colonial/capitalist energy transition look like?* ‘Transition’, we recognize, has become a pacification device (Dunlap, 2023) or, in Gramscian terms, a passive revolution (Newell, 2019; Hesketh, 2021), generating a spectacle that (re)affirms extractivist and colonial legacies, but more so justifies increasing mining and its corresponding violence of the present and future. Energy transition, or the green economy in general (Dunlap, 2023), legitimizes dispossession by promoting a ‘green’, ‘just’ or ‘fair’ deployment of low-carbon infrastructure that leaves capitalist modernity unchallenged (Reyes, *et al.*, 2022). While a number of scholars have contested the use of the term ‘transition’ by governments and corporate interests (cf. Barca, 2011; Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2016; Franquesa, 2018; York & Bell, 2019; Dunlap, 2021b), *critical research* seems to have been reduced to critiques and denunciations of this framework with little else to show for it. These panels, and future special issue, call for an exploration into the *pluriverse of transitions*.

While international governance bodies and governments across the world promote, or acquiesce,

to ecological modernism and green growth (Mastini et al., 2021), urban and rural peoples—Indigenous, peasant and other oppressed humans (and implicitly non-humans)—have begun to reorganize their relations with the territory and resist extractive impositions. The abstraction and commodification of energy that seeks to (re)formulate territorial relationships is being resisted through solidarity, direct action, mutual-aid and other(ed) knowledges (Dunlap, 2018b; De Onis, 2021; Post, 2023; Tornel, 2023b). These communal alternatives ‘from below,’ while different in scale and reach, constitute multiple forms of resistance and struggles for re-existence revealing other horizons of the possible (Escobar, 2020; Gutierrez Aguilar, 2020). This panel, and later, special issue seeks to present cases studies of *alternative, autonomous and insurrectionary transitions* form ‘below.’ This special issue, said simply, offers an exploration into postdevelopmental transition(s) and a glimpse into the pluriverse of energy transition.

The scope of this panel(s) (and special issue) seeks to include papers contributing and learning from autonomous and rebellious energy initiatives from below. This panel(s) welcomes paper exploring postdevelopment and pluriversal transition(s), which explores how people are organizing their energy, food, shelter and self-defense in a way that challenges modernist development, capitalism and statism in whole or in part. We welcome paper proposals that engage the following topics:

- Research documenting case-studies of autonomous energy transitions form below;
- Contestations, reformulations and/or rejections of the term "justice" as forms of grounded-normativities of different territorial, solidaristic and place-based practices (for a discussion see Coulthard 2014; Simpson, 2018);
- Territorial-based practices and/or (re)conceptualizations of autonomist energy systems centering gender and care as the basis for community and/or energy autonomy.
- Formulations of energy transformations linked to popular-community horizons, and territorial-based practices.
- Case studies detailing experiences of energy sovereignty, radical democracy and autonomy in different geographies. Emphasis on the limitations, challenges and de possibilities are encouraged;
- Theoretical and practical discussions that advance anti-colonial and anti-capitalist definitions of transition, transformation, autonomy, and ‘energy justice’ form below;
- Reflections – based on theory and/or praxis – over the role of militant research and the practice of solidarity with territorial struggles form inside and outside the university;
- Dialogues between the pluriversal and postdevelopment alternatives with particular place-based experiences shaping energy transitions form below.
- Ways in which postdevelopment thinking can contribute to an energy transition proposal beyond the epistemology and ontology of development.

Panel Submission and Special Issue Development

The POLLEN 2024 Conference is organized to support the development of a special issue on The Pluriverse of Transitions in *Human Geography*. The proposed panels for POLLEN 2024 will be a site of greeting, congregation, and exchanging editorial feedback collectively before submitting to the special issue. Upon acceptance into the panels (decision by **December 2 2023**), this means **complete manuscripts drafts** should be submitted to us by **no later than May 15th**,

2024. This allows time for each other, or select people, to read each other's papers before the conference.

To express interest in these proposed conference panels (and eventual special issue), please submit a ***title page*** by **November 20th, 2023**. Please take care to make sure each title page has the following elements in this order:

- Provisional presentation title
- Author(s) names & Affiliation(s)
- Email address
- Abstract (200-250 words)
- 5-6 Keywords

Please use Times New Roman Font, 12pt the body of text.

Please send title pages to Carlos Tornel (tornelc@gmail.com), and Alexander Dunlap (alexander.a.dunlap@gmail.com) by and, preferably, ***before*** November 20th, 2023.

By **December 2nd, 2023**, we will notify authors about our decision, and submit our panel proposal before the POLLEN deadline of December 15th, 2023.

Then, as mentioned, we expect a manuscript submission before POLLEN 2024, on **May 15th, 2024**, to begin the process of editorial feedback and draft exchanges between conference and special issue participants.

We look forward to your title pages, experiences and ideas!

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