

„Extraction: The Frontiers of Green Capitalism“

Will green technologies and renewable energy save us from climate change? While public policies focus increasingly on a “clean” energy transition, the discussion shies away from the vexing dilemmas of raw materials supply chains. Minerals such as coltan, lithium and others are necessary to produce the technology needed for an energy transition, from batteries to windmills. However, their extraction often has serious environmental and social consequences.

In her book “Extraction: The Frontiers of Green Capitalism”, Thea Riofrancos explores the production of lithium, a critical resource for renewable energy storage, electric transportation and many other uses. Its mining is responsible for water depletion, chemical pollution, habitat and biodiversity loss. In production countries, environmental and Indigenous movements contest the rapid expansion of extraction, defending ecosystems, livelihoods and waterways already under pressure from global warming. Thea Riofrancos’ book tells the story of how a critical mineral became the focus of a worldwide battle over the future of green energy and, by extension, capitalism. This battle has become part of geopolitics as growing energy requirements linked to transport, digitalisation, and recently AI and military technologies have unleashed an ever-increasing rush for the extraction of minerals.

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Foto: Lithiumvorkommen in Bolivien
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Thea Riofrancos in Conversation
with Simela Papatheophilou

8 June 2026, 19.00

Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue
Armbrustergasse 15, 1190 Wien

Speakers:

Irene Horejs, Former EU Ambassador, Curator, Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue will deliver the opening remarks.



Thea Riofrancos will deliver the keynote. She is an associate professor of political science at Providence College, Rhode Island, co-director of the Climate Community Institute and a fellow at the Transnational Institute. She is the author of several books and writes for, among others, Jacobin and the Guardian.



Simela Papatheophilou will moderate the discussion. She is a law and development researcher. She works at the Austrian Foundation for Development Research (ÖFSE), where much of her work is on raw materials policy and trade policy.

Thea Riofrancos:

Extraktion. Über die Grenzen des grünen Kapitalismus

Aus dem Amerikanischen von
Stephan Gebauer

Suhrkamp Verlag, Mai 2026,
28,00 €

