

Analysing an environmental conflict

Seven questions for the group work in Session 6 — and for your poster

2026-10-28

Task (20 min, country groups). Open the [Environmental Justice Atlas](#) and filter by your country. Pick **one** conflict — ideally one linked to a major export of your country. No case for your country? Take one linked to its main export commodity (Atlas of Economic Complexity). Work through the seven questions; then report in **2 minutes, starting with question 7**.

Why these questions. They follow the conceptual framework of Scheidel *et al.* (2018) — conflicts over the environment arise from a growing social metabolism (*why*), are carried by particular actors (*through whom*), are fought in different valuation languages (*how*), and unfold in stages of mobilisation (*when*). The sub-questions follow the template on which every EJAtlas case is coded (Temper *et al.* 2015), so most answers can be found on the case page.

Question	Guiding sub-questions	Based on
1 What and where?	Which project, which commodity, which type of conflict? Where exactly, since when?	Temper <i>et al.</i> (2015)
2 Why? The metabolic driver	Which flow of materials, energy, water or waste is at stake? Where does the commodity go — who consumes it? Who receives the benefits, who bears the costs?	Scheidel <i>et al.</i> (2018); Martínez-Alier <i>et al.</i> (2010)
3 Through whom? Actors	Companies (and their home countries), state agencies, financiers; affected and mobilising groups, NGOs. Who has power, money, legal standing?	Scheidel <i>et al.</i> (2018); Temper <i>et al.</i> (2015)
4 Impacts	Environmental, health and socio-economic impacts. Visible already, or potential? Which groups are hit hardest?	Temper <i>et al.</i> (2015); Scheidel <i>et al.</i> (2023)
5 How? Valuation languages	In which terms do the parties argue — money, jobs, compensation, or livelihood, territory, sacredness, rights? Are some languages excluded from the decision?	Martínez-Alier (2002); Martínez-Alier <i>et al.</i> (2010)
6 When? Mobilisation and outcome	Preventive, reacting to the project, or demanding reparation? Forms of protest, litigation, intensity. Repression or violence — direct, but also slow or structural? Outcome?	Scheidel <i>et al.</i> (2020); Navas <i>et al.</i> (2018)
7 So what? For your poster	What does the case tell you about your country's position in world trade — and about the twin challenge of social provisioning and ecological sustainability?	Session 5; Dorninger <i>et al.</i> (2021)

Read the atlas critically. The EJAtlas lists conflicts that were *documented*, often together with those mobilising (Temper *et al.* 2015). Coverage differs strongly between countries (Scheidel *et al.* 2023), and a missing entry does not mean there is no conflict. Treat a case page as a starting point: check it against at least one peer-reviewed case study or another independent source, and note on your poster where your information comes from.

Background. Why the poor often defend the environment — because they live from it — is the argument of the *environmentalism of the poor* (Anguelovski and Martínez-Alier 2014; Martínez-Alier 2002). A global overview of

what mobilisations achieve and at what risk is Scheidel *et al.* (2020). The worked example in the lecture draws on Flores Fernández and Alba (2023) (open access) and Jerez Henríquez *et al.* (2021).

References

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