

OPSAL and 'Sand im Getriebe' make lithium mining conflicts in the Puna Atacameña visible at a camp for Mobility Justice in Munich, Germany

The Plurinational Observatory of Andean Salt Flats (OPSAL) participated in the [#BlockIAA2023, Camp for Mobility Justice organized by the German alliance 'Sand im Getriebe'](#), where various social movements carried out actions and protests against the Internationale Automobil-Ausstellung (IAA), the world's largest international automobile fair held in Munich every year.

In front of more than three thousand people, Juan Donoso, OPSAL partner in Germany and director of ['Formando Rutas'](#), discussed how the extraction of lithium for the automotive industry - which seeks to position electromobility as a solution to climate change - generates strong conflicts in the Puna Atacameña. "About 80% of the lithium extracted in Chile goes to China and the European Union (EU), where Germany is the largest car-producing country in the EU."

"We have to constantly remind the Europeans that their ways, the imperial ways of life they have are affecting our territories, through Free Trade Agreements, Multi or Bilateral Treaties, where those who are finally harmed are always on the periphery", he maintained during the press conference, where he added that "We do not need more destruction. We do not need more delegations from Volkswagen, Porsche and Mercedes Benz to come to Chile, Bolivia and Argentina with the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) to convince us how good the world will be with these minerals".

During his speech, Donoso also raised the problem of certification processes and different mining standards - such as EITI or IRMA - for the misnamed "green mining", which leads to water depletion in the communities of the Puna Atacameña, with consequences for their local economies such as agriculture, livestock, tourism and others.

"Mining certification schemes are the ultimate form of greenwashing in the Global South, promoted by the European Union and Ursula Von der Leyen (*current president of the European Commission*). 'Green Mining' recognizes the right to negotiate and compensate, but never recognizes the right of people and communities to say NO, nor do governments apply ILO Convention 169, which requires free, prior and informed consultation. People should have the right to say NO to mining, no more compensation or negotiations. Just the right to say NO. Enough is enough. All this, not to mention brutal repression of popular protests, criminalization of social movements, persecution and assassination of social leaders and militarization of so many territories," added Donoso.

Meanwhile ['Sand im Getriebe'](#), a German alliance that stands [for climate justice and the the event organizer, argues that](#) "Electric cars can never guarantee climate-friendly mobility for all and only shift and hide the problems of cars from one region of the world to another, exactly to the places and people who are already much more affected by the consequences of the climate crisis. So in order that cars can leave the production lines in Munich, Wolfsburg, Stuttgart and Ingolstadt, groundwater and the livelihoods of their inhabitants are pumped, among others, in the [Atacama Desert in Chile](#) or in [Jujuy in Argentina](#), to extract lithium."

Thanks to the call of Sand im Getriebe, the activists also blocked the International Motor Show in Frankfurt am Main and Munich in September 2019 and 2021. From the alliance, they oppose an automotive industry that they consider obsolete, oversized and resource-consuming. "Rather, we now have to rethink the production and reproduction of our mobility, away from individual transport and short-sighted profits, towards collectivity and needs-oriented policies. **We need a massive expansion of public transport and at the same time a socialization of car companies**, where the focus is on people's needs and not on the imperatives of growth and profit maximization", they expressed.

Also, the director of [Formando Rutas](#), presented a preview of the [documentary](#) "All We Have is Us" in the context of the Mobility Justice Camp held in Munich, Germany. This documentary is about the struggles and solidarity between social movements against the lithium extractivist model in the Puna Atacameña (Chile, Argentina and Bolivia) and the Jadar Valley (Serbia).



Juan Donoso of Formando Rutas at #BlockIAA 2023 camp press conference - Take power away from auto companies, protect the climate!





[Activities in the framework of #BlockIAA2023. Camp for Mobility Justice organized by the German alliance 'Sand im Getriebe'.](#)