



## Master's Thesis

### A market for conflict(-free) minerals

Since two decades we know '*Diamonds are a Rebel's Best Friend*'. Watchdogs like Global Witness began emphasising increasingly intimate relationships between armed conflict, human rights abuses and natural resource exploitation in Africa and beyond.

Partly as a result of their 'naming and shaming' campaigns, initiatives to curtail the sourcing of so-called 'blood minerals' (often: diamonds, gold, tantalum, tungsten, or tin) from African war zones are mushrooming. A (coincidental) convergence of international rights campaigns and corporate social responsibility provoked rapid changes in the way exploitation and trade of natural resources in and from Africa is being reshaped in terms of regulation and access and how markets are (dis-)articulated from mines to malls.

This master topic analyses the ways in which industry initiatives create a market for conflict-free minerals in the global north and how these attempts shape patterns of exploitation, trade, and economic governance in Africa. The following questions will guide the student's evaluation of current controversies around conflict-free minerals:

- (1) What are the underlying assumptions about the relationship between armed conflict and mineral exploitation that underpin current initiatives for conflict-free sourcing?
- (2) How do these initiatives envisage political and economic change in the supply chains linking the exploitation, refinement, and processing of such minerals?
- (3) What larger socio-economic processes of regulatory hybridisation do these initiatives enact and/or support in the areas of mineral exploitation?
- (4) How does the discourse around such initiatives interact with facts 'on the ground' (e.g. evolution of armed conflict, credibility of sourcing schemes, etc.)?

Besides ongoing debates in Switzerland and in the European Union, students may choose from the following (non-exhaustive) list of case studies:

- Conflict-Free Smelters Programme (EICC and GeSI)
- Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act ('Dodd-Frank Act') section 1502
- Current attempts of an EU legislation on these matters
- The role of CSR in the extractive sector within South-South cooperation
- Fairphone (a Netherlands-based social enterprise)
- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)
- African Mining Vision (African Union)
- International Tin Research Institute Tin Supply Chain Initiative (in short: iTSCi)
- OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas

Methods: literature review, media review, fieldwork (pending security), interviews

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