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Governing Rare Earths and Other Critical Materials: Climate, Economics, and Politics



Environmental and economic governance of critical raw materials is an ongoing challenge. The challenges, and the stakes, of critical raw materials governance entangle across multiple scales. Challenges at the international scale are characterized by competing national strategies to secure supply, shifting geographies of extraction, and weak regulatory regimes which undermines transparency and free trade-oriented objectives.

Around the world, national strategies range from unleashing prospecting bonanzas to reducing production to remediate environmental harm, and local issues encompass efforts to recruit mining and industrial facilities as well as fierce resistance in the name of labor rights, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.

Dr. Julie Michelle Klinger will discuss these dynamics by drawing on three domains of her professional experience: (1) several years' fieldwork in local languages in Brazil, China, and the US; (2) Work on the development of rare earth mining, processing, and recycling standards as a member of the International Standards Organization Technical Committee 298; and (3) Ongoing research to characterize the global informal trade in energy-critical materials using machine learning, remote sensing, and multilingual qualitative research, funded by the US National Science Foundation.

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