AN EXERCISE IN WORLD MAKING

A COLLECTION OF THE ORIGINAL STUDENT ESSAYS OF 2023-24

International Institute of Social Studies

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter

Acronyms

COA	Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA) (Central Organisation Asylum-seekers)
VWN	Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (Refugee Council Netherlands)
IND	Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigrataion and Naturalisation Service)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NSL	National Strategy of Lithium
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
US	United States of America
AGC	Clan del Golfo or Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NIR	Northern Ireland
IE	Republic of Ireland
UK	United Kingdom
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
FRA	Food Regime Analysis
VAT	Valued Added Tax
EV	Electrical Vehicle
FEOC	Foreign Entities of Concern
NE	National Education
CCE	Character and Citizenship Education
VIA	Values in Action Program
MCA	Membership Categorization Analysis
MGTOW	Men Going Their Own Way

Preface

The ISS Editorial Board is pleased to present this year's edition of strong and original student essays from the MA programme in *Development Studies* at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus. Professors from various courses and majors in the programme nominated the best essays submitted in their courses. Subsequently, the team of student editors rigorously selected the best essays based on criteria such as quality of writing, compelling analysis, and originality. ISS lecturer Dr. Peter Bardoel supervised and coordinated the process as editor-in-chief. Our goal throughout was to capture the diversity of thought and scholarship at ISS, prioritising creative, well-argued, and reflective essays.

The resulting book is a collection of these writings, touching on topics as wide-ranging as migration and political ecology to body politics, trade, gender studies, and decoloniality. The rich case studies that the essays explore offer empirical laboratories for wider academic debates which we have encountered in our coursework at ISS. Far from offering reductive or simplistic narratives, they grapple with the complexities and ambiguities that reside in the "grey spaces" of development—beyond the rigid binaries and hierarchies that often frame discussions of environmental, economic, social, and political issues.

Many of the essays in this edition embody a deeply subjective and grounded perspective, drawing on personal contexts and lived experiences as vital sources of knowledge. By blending rigorous academic analysis with these embedded insights, the authors resist a colonial structuring of knowledge. Instead, they contribute to what Walter Mignolo terms *epistemic disobedience*, reclaiming the narratives and intellectual frameworks of development from the perspectives of those most intimately involved. This approach not only enriches our understanding of the issues at hand but also reflects the spirit of ISS as a critical institute for development studies, where students from around the world bring their unique voices to global discussions.

We hope you will enjoy reading this collection of essays and appreciate the diversity of thought, approaches, and research themes within our institute and within the batch of the MA students 2023/2024

Sincerely,

The Student Editors of this year's 2023/2024 edition

Zsabrina Marchsya Ayunda, Junko Aoki, Preksha Gupta, Najib Hussen, Muhammed Alhassan Yakubu, Maria Tamara Lozano, Manju von Rospatt, Mohammed Rashad Mutawakil

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Bodies Designed for Profit.

Eno-Obong, E. SJP. Nigeria

As a person working on gender-related issues in the Nigerian context, I was convinced that the root cause of gender inequality and discrimination of sexual and gender minorities was only tied to socio-cultural norms and unfavourable state policies. Several factors that I failed to consider were its links to state control, coloniality, and, importantly, capitalism. My interaction with the concept of body politics has provided me with new insights that place the body central to capitalist movements. From the regulation of the body by the state to the utilisation of certain bodies to drive profits, the body is a canvas for the expression of capitalism and state power (Brown and Gershon, 2017, p. 1; Harcourt, 2019, pp. 247–248). This commodification and socio-political control of human bodies is what is referred to as body politics and has birthed the need to reclaim control of the body via "body politics activism" (Harcourt, 2019, pp. 247).

In this essay, I will reflect on my understanding of body politics and its relation to capitalism, citing three examples: the commodification of women in the Nigerian banking sector – referred to as 'corporate prostitution,' state control of sexual minorities and gender non-conforming bodies, and the sexualization of bodies in the creative industry. Next, I will discuss some body politics activism in Nigeria and conclude with how decoloniality can be a useful lens for body politics resistance.

Examples of Body Politics at Work

'Corporate Prostitution'

The Nigerian banking sector is notorious for employing women to fill marketing roles. Possessing certain desirable features like being tall, slender, and light-skinned, these females are employed with an unspoken expectation to utilise their sexuality to appeal to high-net-worth individuals – often men – to the bank's customer base. The logic behind this is that females 'attract' more customers. Many banks are known to set unrealistic financial targets for these marketers, with some running into millions of Naira per month, and phrases such as "do what you must [to bring in customers]" are alleged to be used by management, compelling women to utilise their bodies to fulfil these demands.

In turn, this sexualization of female bodies has emboldened men to request sex as compensation for account opening and deposit of funds in the respective banks. The aim is ultimately to drive profit for the banks. The ability to consistently meet one's monthly target determines the likelihood of career advancement, and employees who fail to do so are eventually dismissed. This pervasive commodification of female bodies led to the push for an anti-corporate prostitution and exploitation bill in 2010 and 2016 by the Nigerian Senate.

LGBTIQ+ and State Control

Another manifestation of body politics is in the regulation of sexuality by the state. Harcourt (2019), in her work, links the body politics discourse to Foucault's concept of Biopolitics (p. 248), which refers to the socio-political control and regulation of life, often resulting in the reproduction of gendered identities. Another closely linked concept is Mbembe's necropolitics, which discusses the sovereignty of the body, often manifesting as state threats to life and death (Mbembe, 2019). For instance, in Nigeria, the state subjects LGBTIQ+ bodies to discrimination and threats to life through the same-sex prohibition act, which criminalizes all forms of same-sex relationships. This law exemplifies body politics because it regulates how bodies must exist.

Brown (2017) and Alexander (1994) also discuss systemic control of bodies as a means of ensuring conformity to state order. According to Alexander, the state naturalises heterosexuality and condemns all forms of sexuality that do not result in the reproduction of a nation. In doing this, the state marks bodies as reproduction sites. Situating the capitalism and body politics discourse in LGBTIQ+ rights enables one to understand that state regulation of sexuality is also rooted in maintaining the future labour force. States have historically frowned upon non-traditional family structures because women's bodies have been positioned for population growth. Moreover, capitalism is known to thrive on hierarchies and the gendered division of labour, and gender non-conforming persons challenge these ascribed roles and responsibilities. In recouping heterosexuality, the state ensures the security of the future population and, ultimately, the future labour workforce.

Body Politics and the Creative Industry

The creative industry thrives on the sexualization of women's bodies. 'Sex sells' is a capitalist phrase utilised in the marketing and entertainment industry as justification to portray women's bodies in a 'sexually appealing' manner under the guise of sexual liberation. Female talent and capacity for career advancement in the creative industry are measured by whatever erotic heights the body can achieve. Artists have been reduced to a level where their bodies, not talent, are a pre-qualification for success. From actresses being denied roles for a lack of sexual appeal to the use of barely dressed females as music video vixens, female artists have related the pressure from their management to portray certain sex appeal to remain relevant. This hyper-sexualization of female bodies is a capitalist movement for profit-making. The more the viewership, the higher the financial revenue for both artist and, particularly, management.

To exemplify, 24 hours into its release, a music video of female musicians Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's *WAP* song – that featured five minutes of 'twerking' – earned 26 million views, winning the record for the most views in 24 hours (Wood, 2020). This is no attempt to condemn the artist but to buttress societal response to the hyper-sexualization of women. The pressure to maintain these socially acceptable body standards has created a capitalist market for plastic surgery globally, and many women have resorted to surgical procedures to conform.

Body Politics Activism in Nigeria

Anti-corporate Prostitution and Exploitation Bill

In 2010 and 2016, members of the Nigerian Senate sought to criminalise the pervasive commodification of female workers in commercial banks to drive profits through the anti-corporate prostitution and exploitation bill. Its intention was to prohibit employers from exploiting employees to commit 'iniquitous' acts that compromise their integrity for their benefit. Although many welcomed this bill, it received several backlashes from the banking sector and was not adopted by the senate.

Activism may often fail but 'succeed' in creating the needed effort to spark public interest in certain issues and catalyse into new forms of activism (Wonneberger, 2024, p. 38). Although the anti-corporate prostitution bill is yet to be passed into law, it generated much-needed public attention on the issue and translated into invigorated efforts by female-led organisations to push for anti-harassment bills in workplaces and institutions at the senate level. One such bill is the anti-harassment bill in tertiary institutions.

Queer Activism

Same-sex relationships are a crime in Nigeria, punishable with up to 14 years of imprisonment. This law criminalises same-sex relationships and all types of support for such individuals. Notwithstanding, several individuals and organisations continue to advocate for the right to life, health, and social services for these groups. Anti-capitalist queer activism in Nigeria has included the fight for reproductive justice, equally, against healthcare systems that focus on profit-making over necessary life-saving medical care for gender non-conforming bodies, despite state resistance. Resistance such as the fight for inclusion in employment opportunities for queer persons, representation in organisations and institutions, and advocacy against workplace exploitation all contribute to body politics activism.

Decoloniality as a Lens for Body Politics Activism

The categories in which we define ourselves, and the control of gender as well as sexuality, are rooted in Universalist understandings of the world and the "colonial matrix of power" (Icaza, 2023; Murrey and Daley, 2023, p. 3). For instance, in her work, Oyewumi (1997) discusses non-gendered binaries in pre-colonial Yoruba ethos and gendered ways of being and doing as a Eurocentric imposition on the South. Old non-colonial languages buttress this point. In my mother tongue, Ibibio, old translations of the Bible did not have gender connotations, implying that the fundamentals of the language were non-gendered. People were referred to as *Owo* – person/being, and *Ikot* – tribe. However, with westernized ethos came the need for categorisation of humans into different sexual and gender categories, creating societal hierarchies and gendered patterns of behaviour, particularly for control.

Positioning decoloniality in body politics activism requires delinking from Western ideologies of gender and humanness. Activists can benefit from situating their resistance in narratives that do not encourage or conform to Eurocentric and colonial dominant narratives. For instance, recent queer activism by Nigerians has been rooted in re-telling the stories of old Yoruba cosmology by relating its gender complexities and gender-fluid nature through anthropological research and modern art.

Conclusion

Body politics is the commodification and control of human bodies and experiences often through hegemonic power relations, and body politics resistance aims to challenge capitalist, colonial, and socio-political discourses that have shaped hegemonic perceptions of the body (Harcourt, 2019). If our bodies are sites that are transformed by hegemonic social relations and "hetero-patriarchal capitalism" (Harcourt, Icaza, and Vargas, 2016, p. 150), we must sever from those ties and learn alternative ways of being, doing, and thinking. Body politics activism provides an opportunity to dispel colonial and hegemonic gendered behaviour that has resulted in the categorisation of women and gender non-conforming persons in the lower global pyramid of power.

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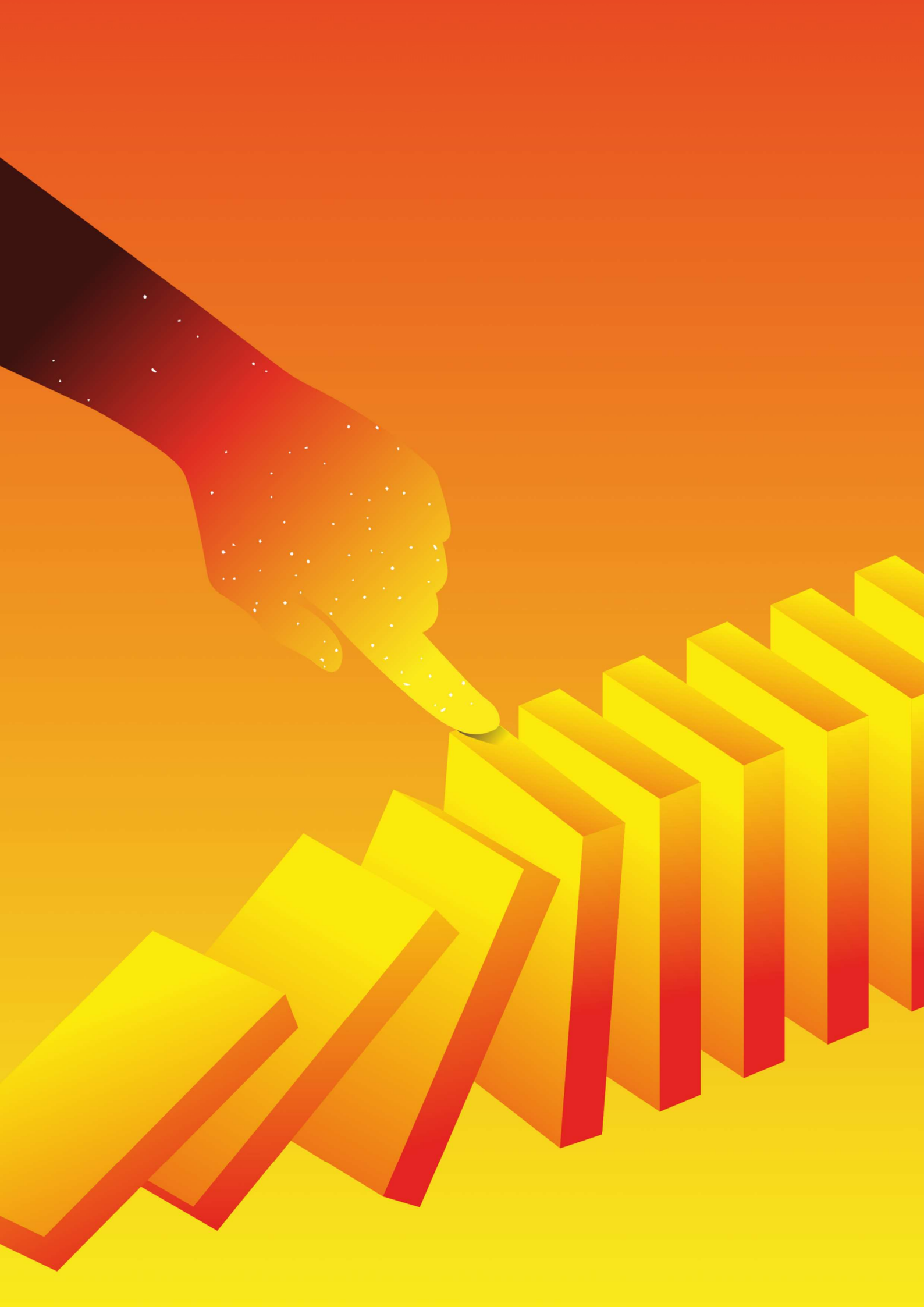


Community Economies in The Hague

Niloufar Samavatipour.SJP. Iran

Introduction

Community Economies is one of the most intriguing and relatively lesser-known concepts, at least for someone with a non-economic background, like me; one that is easy to form a pre-conceived notion of, based on a surface-level perception of the two words: community and economies. According to this concept, and contrary to the individualistic tendencies,

> "economies are always plural, containing diverse forms of economic organisation, exchange, remuneration, finance, care, and ownership. Consequently, economies are not understood as a systematic totality. Correspondingly, 'community' is understood as always open. Coexistence is the basis for belonging, rather than being from a particular place, …" (Healy, Heras and North, 2022).

These are values that have been largely disregarded in this day and age, when "remarkably, most contemporary economists and politicians have forgotten the difference between the market and capitalism" (van Staveren, 2020).

In this essay, a community economy is taken as the main concept to:

- Firstly, understand and delve deeper into, and
- Secondly, apply to a case study in The Netherlands that encompasses its virtues, and
- Thirdly, analyse different supporting or critical arguments around it.

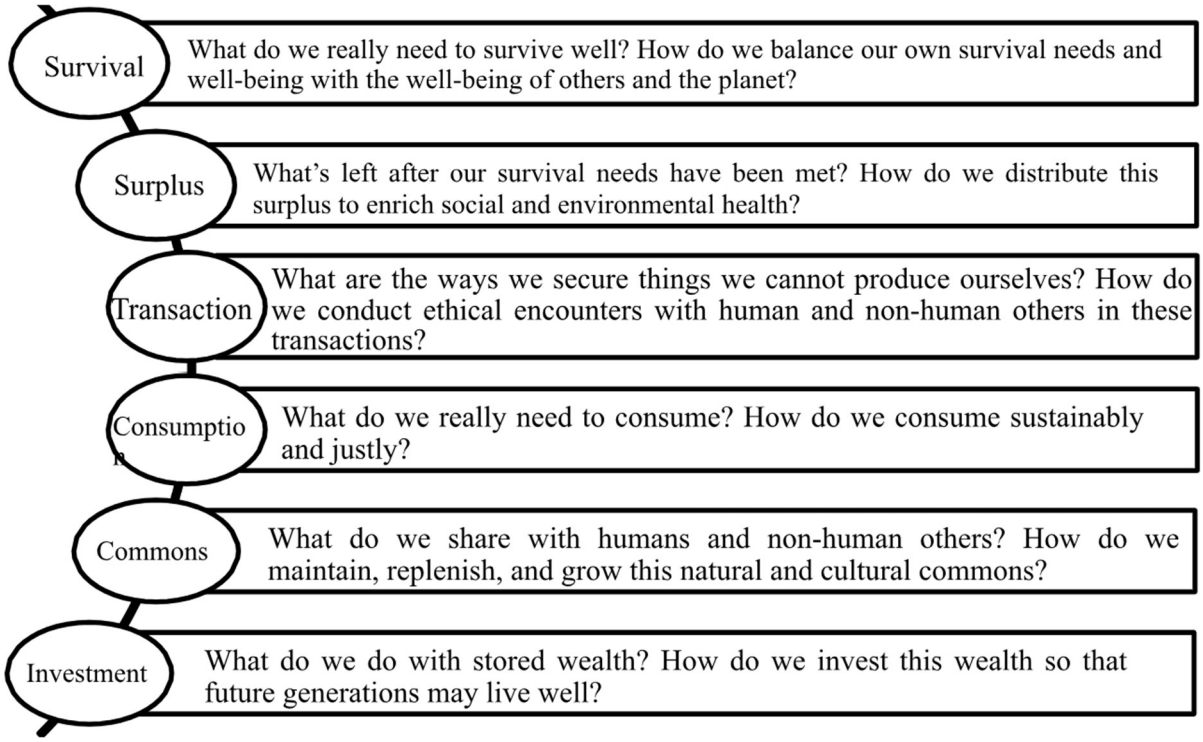
Definition and framework: Community Economies

There seems to be a common misconception about the definition of community economics; one that I was initially trapped in as well. At first glance, the two words "community" and "economy" coming together might seem as if it refers to a local economy or is limited to a localized economic mechanism; whereas in fact, it can be that in some instances but generally, its impacts are far beyond just a local module. Therefore, before anything else, I believe it is vital to begin with a clear definition of what community economies are.

"Community Economies research and practice seeks to bring about more sustainable and equitable forms of development by cultivating and acting on new ways of thinking about economies

and politics. Building on J.K. Gibson-Graham's feminist critique of political economy, this approach challenges three problematic aspects of how "the economy" is understood: seeing it as inevitably capitalist, assuming that it is a determining force rather than a site for politics and transformation, and separating economy from ecology" (Community Economies Institute, n.d., para. 1-2). Represented below are a few identifying factors or in other words, "coordinates", which community economies is based upon:

Figure 1: Factors underlying community economy



Source: (Community Economies Institute, n.d., para. 15-20)

In a nutshell, "Community economy names the ongoing process of negotiating our interdependence. It is the explicit, democratic co-creation of the diverse ways in which we collectively make our livings, receive our livings from others, and provide for others" (Community Economies Institute, n.d.).

After reading more on this concept, I was able to have a clearer picture of what community economy is and what it is capable of, and more importantly, I was reminded of witnessing one way of its numerous possible manifestations, here in The Netherlands.

Case Study and Analysis

In the first few weeks of living in The Hague, I was introduced to a group of volunteers in the city who were trying to take steps towards sustainability. Perhaps a lesser-known fact to internationals is that every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, when the Hague Market (in Dutch: Haagse Markt) is closing, there is a noticeable amount of fruits and vegetables that have not been sold and the owners throw away. Here is when this group of people takes action. Stopping the large-scale food wastage - in addition to providing food on a budget, and creating a sense of community and belonging- were one of their multifaceted purposes.

This is a community that has been shaped for a few years now and is always welcoming to newcomers. Managed by 2-3 young creative minds, this communal kitchen/ dining hall opens its door to approximately 70-90 volunteers every week on Tuesdays. First, they circulate an online form, in which one could volunteer for only one of these departments:

- Going to The Hague Market and getting the fruits and vegetables that the owners want to throw away, when they are still edible and before they go to waste
- Cooking an appetizer, main meal, and desert with the ingredients that are brought from the market
- Cleaning duty

It needs to be said that the list is provided weekly so that every person interested in volunteering to participate in the labour in different categories is provided with a fair chance to do so and there are no permanent members or guaranteed spots. Typically, 4-6 people are needed for each category. The volunteers, who have put their names on the list, get to enjoy the 3 course meal for free in exchange for their labour; while the rest of the people are asked to donate anything from 6-10 Euros upon arrival at the doorsteps.

While talking to one of the managers, they said that there was absolutely no pressure to donate a certain amount and that everybody was free to donate anything according to their budget and affordability. They emphasized that even 2 Euros is more than appreciated and that 100% of the collected money on each of these weekly sessions goes to paying the rent for the place and there is zero personal gain for the people in charge.

Initially, the first thing that came to my mind was sustainability and food security for the less-privileged; however, this particular mechanism deserves a deeper analysis and insight. After reading

more about community economies, I believe this can be a perfect example of a successful case in that regard; A win-win scenario for market, people and environment.

Criticism

While explaining this particular case and discussing the concept of community economy in general - to my surprise- not everybody trusted in this system. One of the most unexpected reactions was when someone asked why the volunteers do not sell the food and desserts that they make with the ingredients from the market, instead of consuming it. After making sure that I heard and understood that correctly, I simply asked 'why?', whilst being more confused. Their reasoning was instead of 'just consuming' they can make some money by selling it.

I explained that it is not about the money, it is about working together, putting community over individualistic gains, which is why the managers are not after the collected money and use it purely for rent and utilities of the place. It is about not letting food go to waste, whereas if they sell the prepared meals, they would have to buy more and consume other foods for their own needs; which leads to more consumption and wastage, denying access to for the less privileged, and undermines the entire purpose.

What fascinates me the most is how far the capitalistic view towards our times on earth is engrained in our minds "as if the whole of economics is dominated by market thinking or, worse, at the service of capitalism" (van Staveren, 2020). I marvel at how dangerous this outlook can be for our planet and livelihood, and to what extent the pluralistic approach of community economies can challenge that.

Another point that was discussed and made some people skeptical towards community economies was the fact that in some cases, those in charge –for instance, some of the farmers in Ostrom's (2013) case- are pursuing their personal gains and not the community's benefit. This sort of individualistic, profit-oriented approach will undoubtedly lead to the failure of this model.

Conclusion

The presented case study showcases a successful story of a circular social-economic and environment-friendly mechanism that is sustainable in the long run. It covers the presented community economies' framework (including survival, surplus, consumption, etc.) and much more.

It goes beyond fiscal aspects and looks out for the environment, saving scarce food resources and more importantly, builds on social capital. It provides a haven to meet new people, make friends, establish a sense of belonging, and be part of a diverse team, working together for the greater good.

At the same time, it is crucial to acknowledge that one model cannot be generalized and applied everywhere with a total disregard for contexts. Whilst the Community Economies approach proves that our lives function in a more "pluriverse manner rather than a universal one, there is a range of solutions and strategies for change and multiple pathways toward more sustainable and equitable worlds" (Community Economies Institute, n.d.). Similarly, Ostrom (2013) aptly reiterates that having this mindset that one single model can be applied everywhere and help economies flourish in developing countries is similar to sending a so-called expert from Denmark to 'fix' Djibouti's economy (p. 26).

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Strategic Litigation in response to the Asylum Reception Crisis in 2022, the Netherlands

Paco Kuit. SJP. The Netherlands

Figure 1: **Ter Apel, asylum registration center during the reception crisis of 2022**. Source: NOS, 2023.

Introduction

It's mid-summer 2022 when images from Ter Apel, the asylum registration center in the North of the Netherlands, appear on social media and the news which show hundreds of asylum seekers sleeping outside waiting for their turn to enter the center (NOS, 2022). What the press covers resembles the situation on the Greek borders more than any Dutch asylum center. No tents, no blankets, no showers. A few times a day, COA staff show up at the fence of the center where asylum seekers quickly line up hoping to register. Some have stayed there for weeks, some for a few days, while the selection at the entrance seems to be randomly depriving the refugees of any form of security (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2022). During the night, new friends take shifts staying awake to control whether nothing gets stolen. After a few weeks, Doctors Without Borders arrive to provide

the outside sleepers with necessary medical care, doing their first mission ever in the Netherlands (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2022). In order to offer at least some form of shelter, two extra "crisis emergency centers" were opened by COA, in fact nothing more than privacy lacking facilities with lines of bunk beds. Meanwhile, registration of asylum seekers remained only possible in Ter Apel, facing refugees with a difficult choice: sleeping outside while having at least a chance to register, or sleeping inside not knowing when you will be able to apply for asylum (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2022). On the 24th of August 2022, a baby died in one of the overpacked emergency halls of Ter Apel (NRC, 2023). Although no link has been found between the death of the baby and the unhealthy circumstances in the hall (Inspectie Gezondheidszorg en Jeugd, 2023), the passing shocked the Netherlands and marked a low point in the humanitarian crisis. NGOs, politicians, activists and civil society called the government to action.

This "reception crisis" was created by the government, argued Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (2022). On the 17th of August, Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (from now on: VWN) announced they were taking the Dutch government to court in a summary proceeding (VWN, 2022a). They demanded the court to judge that the government must comply with their domestic and international directives and law-based norms by the start of October (VWN, 2022a). In this essay, I will describe how the "reception crisis" came into being, how social movements and other actors were involved in legal mobilization and how VWN eventually chose to strategically litigate against the Dutch government. To gain an understanding of the legal strategies applied by VWN, I will look at the case from various analytical frameworks, but first of all, I will elaborate on the key actors involved, and the political and legal background of the crisis.

"Gross negligence and inadequate anticipation"

These are the words VWN (2024b) gives to the attitude of the Dutch government in the build-up of the reception crisis. In order to understand why the state was responsible for the lack of asylum facilities, we need to take a deeper look at the intersection of politics and the law. Key actors in this field are first of all the Ministry of Justice and Security who largely fund the reception of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. The Central Organ for Housing Asylum Seekers (in Dutch abbreviated to COA) is responsible for providing safe shelter,

necessary means, and guidance for a future in the Netherlands or in the country of origin in case a refugee's asylum application is rejected. COA is an independent administrative body of the government and is accountable to the Ministry of Justice and Security (Rijksoverheid, n.d., a). The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (in Dutch abbreviated to IND) processes all applications from people who want to reside in the Netherlands or become Dutch citizens (Rijksoverheid, n.d., b). Municipal governments also had a crucial role in the development of the crisis, since they, at the time, had the right to refuse the state's requests to house asylum seekers in their municipality.

To reduce costs, the Dutch government has structurally applied a policy of upscaling and downscaling the number of asylum centers in response to fluctuations in migration flows (AZCV & ROB, 2022). The government has failed to acknowledge the permanent nature of migration, because "motivations to seek asylum like war and violence are of all times" (AZCV & ROB, 2022). According to the Advisory Commission for Immigration Affairs and the Advisory Council of Public Administration (abbreviated to ACVZ and ROB in Dutch), who delivered a report to the State Secretary of Justice and Security in June 2022, the "crises are the result of a chronic lack of anticipation and freneticism sticking to a financing system and an administrative structure that do not work" (ACZV and ROB, 2022). This kept in place a system whereby the government was constantly being overtaken by "unexpected and unprecedented numbers of refugees" setting up ad hoc crisis emergency centers instead of providing systematic and permanent asylum services. Besides the horrific circumstances outside the Ter Apel camp during the summer of 2022, many asylum seekers, during their asylum procedure, have lived for months in emergency shelters that lack privacy, provision of health care, nutritious food ,and adequate sanitation (VWN, 2022b). The asylum system was subject to wishful thinking by the government which structurally underestimated the financial needs of COA. Already in 2016, the AZCV advised the government that the asylum chain should be stable and flexible at the same time to prevent emergency centers from having to open again. This flexibilisation of the asylum chain could be realized through maintaining a buffer capacity, but the government didn't incorporate this advice. (VWN, 2022b).

Meanwhile, municipalities had legal legitimacy to refuse accommodation of asylum seekers, leading to some municipalities structurally not cooperating on this issue (VWN, 2022b). Hence, in crisis situations, like 2015, the State didn't have the legal power to declare which municipalities should provide asylum services. This has not only complicated the asylum system, but it has

hampered the work of COA, and the IND, and deteriorated the relationship between the municipalities and the state (AZCV and ROB, 2022). In 2024, after several years of the legislative process, the government finally managed to bring about a new law, called “de Spreidingswet”, which gives the government the authority to obligate municipalities to accommodate housing, in case municipalities don’t agree on a distribution of asylum seekers within their province (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2024).

Not only has the government structurally underestimated the budget for COA, but also cut down on the budget of the IND, leading asylum procedures to take up to two years (VWN, 2022b). Together with the housing crisis, troubling the access of status holders to the housing market, this led to 35% of the refugees in COA locations being in fact refugees who already received asylum (VWN, 2022b). Since permanent asylum centers were scaled down and the government lacked a buffer capacity, a slight increase in the migration influx led to the humanitarian deception in 2022 of which the crisis in Ter Apel was the most televised and most extreme result, but perhaps just a tip of the iceberg when taking into consideration the amount of asylum seekers residing in the so-called crisis emergency centers.

Legal Mobilization in the Context of the Reception Crisis

The reception crisis in Ter Apel of course didn’t go unnoticed among migration advocates in the Netherlands. Local initiatives, activist organizations, and NGOs were not only calling the government to action but also taking action themselves. Different forms of legal mobilization were applied in their attempt to improve the situation of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Legal mobilization regards “those instances when social movements explicitly employ rights strategies and tactics in their interactions with the State and other opponents” (Madlingozi, 2014, p.92). Forms of legal mobilization can range from cooperative strategies, like advocacy, local mobilization, and peer reviewing, to more confrontational strategies, like strategic litigation, disruptive protest,s and shaming (Handmaker, 2024). During the reception crisis of 2022, various activist groups mobilized locally and nationally initiating a “solidarity movement” with asylum seekers (Rood Groningen, 2022; Migreat, 2023). In my eyes, this self-named solidarity movement can be referred to as a social movement since it existed of actors lacking access to representative institutions who challenged

authorities by taking charge of those instances that the government failed to provide (Madlingozi, 2014, p.93). Civilians provided the people sleeping outside with food, blankets, camping gear, tents, and more. Activist organizations like Migreat, Doorbraak, and Rood Groningen started fundraisers to collect and buy the most necessary supplies (Migreat, n.d.; Rood Groningen, 2022). This cooperative and seemingly innocent form of legal mobilization was suppressed by the municipality of Westerwolde when firstly police came to take in all the tents, thereafter imposing a prison sentence of three months for those providing tents or any other camping gear (Migreat, 2023). Despite the efforts of the social movement and NGOs, the situation in Ter Apel, during the ten months of the crisis, didn't fundamentally improve and the government wasn't showing any signs of implementing structural adaptations (VWN, 2022b). Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (2022b), an independent refugee rights NGO, decided to go to court and claimed that a court decision could potentially resolve the administrative deadlock invigorating the calls for new permanent asylum centers. This form of legal mobilization is referred to as strategic litigation and can be described as "legal action through a judicial mechanism as a means to create change (legal, political, social) beyond the individual case/interest" (Van der Pas, 2023, p.14). Not every rights mobilizer has access to the courts while litigation isn't enacted by all the actors who can. Jurisdictional terms vary across countries impeding or enabling potential litigators. In addition, some social movements don't perceive litigation as an effective strategy in their fight for justice. So, after months of misery in the emergency centers of COA, Vluchtelingenwerk took the Dutch government to court in a summary proceeding. But why did Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland in particular go to court?

How did the legal conditions in the Dutch jurisdiction and the political conditions impact their choice for strategic litigation? In the next section, I will delve into various analytical frameworks which might help to answer the above-mentioned research question.

Analysis

One of those frameworks, Legal Opportunity Structures (LOS), is applied in the cross-country comparative study by Vanhala (2018) on international NGOs and their legal behavior. LOS regards the extent to which NGOs or social movements have access to the court in particular jurisdictions

and how this impacts their choice for strategic litigation. Scholars agree on three main components of LOS:

1. The *legal stock* indicates the body of laws in a particular context. It influences the types of claims that can be made by NGOs or social movements. In some jurisdictions, for instance, previous cases have a precedential effect on new cases constraining groups from legal standing (Vanhala, 2018, p.384).
2. Then, who has the right to *legal standing*? Over time and space, not everyone has had the right to file a lawsuit. Liberalization of standing rules increases the likelihood that groups will go to court (Vanhala, 2018, p.384).
3. *Legal costs* differ per country. In some countries, like the United Kingdom, the "loser" of the case has to pay the other party's legal costs, creating a chilling effect on potential litigators (Vanhala, 2018, p.385).

Thus, LOS theory suggests that favorable conditions in legal opportunity structures to some extent predict the likelihood that NGOs and social movements turn to the courts. Meanwhile, LOS theorists don't think that there's a deterministic relation between litigators and legal opportunity structures since research has shown that LOS alone cannot fully account for the variation in litigation behavior among similar organizations within the same jurisdiction (Vanhala, 2018; Van der Pas, 2023). Vanhala (2018, p.395), during her research on international NGOs in four different countries (France, Italy, Finland, and the United Kingdom), found that the LOS could not account for the variation in strategies among the different national departments within the international NGOs, such as Greenpeace and WWF. Therefore, Vanhala (2018) proposes a different approach to analyze the variation in strategies among NGOs. This theory states that institutions can have an internal culture that maintains certain rules, norms, and ideologies defining parameters and guiding NGOs legal strategies. Vanhala (2018) hypothesizes that "*if this argument is theoretically sound, we would expect to see that groups are more likely to rely on legal mobilization when their identity and framing processes define "law" as an efficient and morally acceptable target of action and when they see the courts as an appropriate venue within which to pursue their policy goals. Conversely, if an organization's hegemonic ideational frames do not conceptualize the "law" or courts as legitimate targets or venues, it seems unlikely that they will be regular and active participants within judicial*

venues". Institutional framing of the law can be detected in the manner in which organizations speak of the law in their documents and statements. Moreover, Vanhala (2018, p.398) emphasizes the significant impact
individuals can have on an institutional culture. So-called "strategy entrepreneurs" such as in-house lawyers or relationships with pro-bono legal counsels can influence the likelihood that companies or NGOs go to court.

Adding on to Vanhala (2018), in research on four NGOs in the field of asylum in Italy and the Netherlands, Van der Pas (2023) found that Dutch NGOs (including VWN) perceived legal opportunity structures in the Netherlands to be "relatively open". NGOs in the Netherlands have the right to legal standing on behalf of individuals or communities (Van der Pas, 2023). Furthermore, litigators can bring amicus curiae before the highest civil court and the highest administrative courts. Less open conditions, nevertheless, didn't inhibit Italian NGOs from strategically litigating, leaving LOS to be only a minor indicator of NGOs' tendency to go to court in Italy (ibid., 2023). So, the relatively liberalized regulations on legal standing can't account for the differences in legal strategies among Italian and Dutch NGOs. The legal costs, but in particular the financial capabilities of NGOs, do play a role in the capacity of organizations to go to court (ibid, 2023).

From a sociological institutionalism perspective, framing the law as a crucial tool for achieving social transformation and fostering relations with legal experts, both within and outside the organization, can significantly influence NGOs' legal actions (Vanhala, 2018). Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (VWN) has been particularly vocal about its commitment to strategic litigation, having a specialized litigation commission since 2013 (VWN, n.d.). Their website highlights several successful cases involving queer, political, and underage refugees, at national and EU jurisdictional levels. In addition to strategic litigation, VWN supports asylum seekers and their lawyers in the Netherlands throughout the asylum process (VWN, n.d., a). The presence of the specialized commission and its presentation on the website reveals the positive stance towards strategic litigation within the institutional culture of VWN. Besides the internal culture, human resources, alongside financial resources, play a crucial role in shaping legal behavior among NGOs. VWN's strategic litigation commission and in-house lawyers can be perceived as strategy entrepreneurs and demonstrate the organization's substantial access to legal expertise. Moreover,

VWN has strong relations with legal experts outside the company, such as the human rights law firm Prakken d'Oliveira, of whom two lawyers supported the above-discussed summary proceeding (Prakken d'Oliveira, 2022).

Van der Pas (2023) proposes another analytical framework which, according to her, in recent years has largely been neglected in legal mobilization literature. Political scientists initially analysed social movement strategies through a framework of Political Opportunity Structures (POS). Similar to Legal Opportunity Structures, POS theorists speak of 'open' or 'closed' structures. When POS is relatively open, social movements and NGOs have access to political participation. If POS are more 'closed' social movements resort to different forms of action outside the political realm, such as protest and strategic litigation (Van der Pas, 2023). As earlier mentioned, VWN is an organization that applies a variety of strategies. Their work addresses the government, national organizations, and civil society through lobbying, advocacy, policy reviewing, campaigning, and of course strategic litigation (VWN, n.d., b). More than a year before the summary proceeding was initiated and the crisis reached its peak, VWN "raised the alarm and reminded the State and COA of their obligations to provide humane asylum reception in accordance with the legal minimum standards" (Prakken d'Oliveira, 2022). VWN argues that the State has ignored signals in the run-up of the crisis and has left possible solutions unexploited (VWN, 2022b). In other words, cooperative strategies, such as lobbying, advocacy, and reviewing, didn't impact government policies. The lack of policy adaptations shows that political opportunity structures in the context of the reception crisis and the former government were relatively 'closed'. In line with POS theory, this motivated VWN to adapt its strategy and go to court instead (Prakken d'Oliveira, 2022). Meanwhile, Van der Pas (2023) found that litigation and lobbying strategies not necessarily exclude one another, but also function complementary. This nuances the determinative effect that POS has on legal mobilization strategies. Another important note that Van der Pas (2023) highlighted in her research, is that the lack of access to legal means for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants is a substantial motivation for asylum-related NGOs to strategically litigate. This was stressed by the four NGOs researched across Italy and the Netherlands, including VWN.

Lastly, relationships with other NGOs or companies with legal knowledge can also support NGOs in their path to justice (Van der Pas, 2023). VWN often combines forces with other NGOs in

strategic litigation cases like Amnesty International, ECRE, Defence for Children, and Sea-Watch Legal Aid (VWN, n.d., b). The summary proceeding against the government was initiated by Vluchtelingenwerk with the support of two lawyers from the law firm Prakken d'Oliveira (2022).

Conclusion

The summer of 2022 marked the peaking point of the asylum reception crisis in the Netherlands. Social movements and NGOs responded with various forms of legal mobilization to the crisis which, according to them, was created by a negligent government. This study explored why Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (VWN) chose to engage in strategic litigation and how the Dutch legal conditions influenced this decision. The findings suggest that mainly the institutional culture of VWN and the Political Opportunity Structures have impacted the NGOs' choice to go to court.

Despite a recent focus on Legal Opportunity Structures among legal mobilization scholars, LOS isn't significantly determinative for NGOs legal strategies (Vanhala, 2018; Van der Pas; 2023). According to the comparative studies of Vanhala (2018) and Van der Pas (2023), sociological institutionalism offers more useful insights, emphasizing the role of internal organizational culture and strategy entrepreneurs in shaping legal actions. VWN demonstrates its commitment to strategic litigation, clearly framing strategic litigation as a powerful tool of rights mobilization while presenting its greatest litigation successes on its website. This hints at an institutional culture that is supportive of this particular form of legal mobilization. Moreover, the specialized litigation commission highlights the presence of legal experts, or so-called "norm entrepreneurs" within the company. The internal culture and norm entrepreneurs therefore enable VWN to initiate court cases. Following up on that
observation, strategic litigation is familiar ground for NGOs in the asylum field, since the communities they fight for don't have access to legal means (Van der Pas, 2023).

Lastly, it can be concluded that the experienced 'closed' political opportunity structures motivated VWN to initiate a summary proceeding in the summer of 2022. Their advocating, lobbying, and reviewing efforts were denied by an unresponsive government, thereby forcing the

NGO to resort to a more confrontational approach. This is in line with findings from Van der Pas (2023) on four asylum-related NGOs.

In summary, the institutional culture, norm entrepreneurs and POS seem to have impacted VWN's choice to litigate in September 2022. This essay underscored the complexity of analysing NGOs motivations for strategic litigation. A solid uniform framework to detect decisive indicators doesn't seem to exist yet, emphasizing the necessity of using multiple frameworks in order to understand NGOs legal behaviour.

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The Dependence Relations Behind the 'White Gold': A Political Economy Analysis for the Case of Lithium Extraction in Chile

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Because of the growing demand for lithium, driven by the reduction of fossil fuel use and the development of a sustainable energy matrix in the Global North, Chile is increasing lithium extraction in Atacama's salt flat. This extraction industry has an economic, social, and environmental impact in the areas close to the extractive activities, where indigenous groups, such as the Atacameño – Lickanantay, live. In this essay, I explain to what extent the growing demand for lithium, driven by the 'green' energy transition of the Global North, reinforces dependency relationships between the local communities with the global elites.

Global temperature is increasing. Because of its devastating impact on human and natural welfare, in 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed, which focuses on holding "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels". To reach this goal, the countries are invited to develop a long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (United Nations, no date). One strategy is the implementation of green policies for the transition to low-carbon energy production (Jerez et al., 2021). This has been seen as an opportunity to move forward to green capitalism, where production is done sustainably.

The market has been adapting to this new global context through the development of new industries and technologies. Green electromobility is one of them, being the alternative to cars powered by fossil fuels, increasing its sales from 131 thousand cars in 2012 to 6.8 million in 2021. By 2030, at least 30 million electric cars will be sold (Cochilco, 2023, p.1).

In this electromobility scenario, the global lithium demand is projected to grow. This transition to green electromobility requires the extraction of metals and other materials, being lithium one of the principal components for rechargeable battery production (Mejia-Muñoz, 2023, p. 3). The increase in the electric car's provision will increase the lithium demand. The Chilean Copper Commission projects an annual increment of 15.5% in the lithium demand from 2021 to 2035, of which 83% of the demand will be to produce electric cars (Cochilco, 2023, p.9).

Chile has an economically advantageous position in the extraction of Lithium. The biggest lithium reserves are in the 'Lithium Triangle', which is composed of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, and contains 60% of the global total reserves (Cochilco, 2023). Chile's reserves represent about 36-40% of the global total, which are mostly located in the Atacama's salt flat, in the region of Antofagasta (Gobierno de Chile, 2023, p. 9).

The importance of lithium in the Chilean economy is increasing. There are two private companies responsible for lithium extraction: Albemarle, a transnational American company, and SQM (Cochilco, 2023). In 2022, lithium exports represented 8.2% of the total Chilean exports, which is a significant increase of 7.3% respect 2021. This makes lithium the second mining product most relevant in Chilean exports. Also, in the same period, the fiscal income from lithium represented 6.4% of the total (CFA, 2023, p. 3), and the extraction of lithium and other mining activities represented 3.4% of the total GDP (Griffith-Jones et al., 2023).

Local communities and women also economically benefit from this industry. Looking at Argentina's employment indicators, in the province of Salta, the lithium industry increased 40% the number of job positions, mainly due to the mining activity and services related to this industry (Vicente, 2023). For women, this industry has increased their job opportunities, representing 24.7% of the lithium companies' labor force (Pasaragua, 2023).

The higher lithium demand and these economic benefits increase the political pressure to expand the lithium extraction rate. In April 2023, Chilean President Gabriel Boric announced the new National Strategy of Lithium (NSL), which aims to increase the extraction of lithium in the Atacama salt flat by creating the National Lithium Company. In addition, this strategic document proposes the creation of public-private alliances for the value-addition in lithium's productive cycle and recognizes the importance of increasing the participation of communities affected by this industry. (Gobierno de Chile, 2023, p. 4).

Recapitulating, the expansion of this industry is seen as good news for economic development at a national and local level, increasing foreign investment and employment rate. Nevertheless, a critical understanding is necessary to see all the power relations behind the extraction and production of this new 'white gold'. To achieve this, this essay proposes a political

economy analysis of this issue. Political economy studies "the social relations and dynamics of production, property, and power in agrarian formations" (Bernstein and Byres, 2001). In this case, we focus on understanding the ways that green capitalism changes the lives of these territories.

For this analysis, we first need to identify the main actors involved in the extractive process. The first group of actors is composed of the industrial companies Albemarle and SQM, which oversee the extraction and production of lithium. Second, the public institutions are represented – for simplicity's sake – by the State, which has the power to authorize the extractive activity. The third group is the local non-indigenous communities that live close to the salt flats. Finally, the last group of actors is composed of the indigenous community Atacameño – Lickanantay, who have been living next to the salt flat for around 9,000 years (Hernández and Newell, 2023, p. 8).

The first question is: who owns what? The industries own the capital, and the extraction and water rights necessary for lithium production. The State has the public power to "enabling, (un)governing and enforcing extractivism" (Ibid., p. 10), legitimating socially, economically, and culturally the extractive activity as a policy for the country's development (Arsel et al., 2016). The local and indigenous communities own their labour force, participating in the market as wage labourers or self-employed, and land close to the salt flat, where they habit and practice traditional economic activities. Also, the indigenous communities own their ancestral knowledge of nature and social relations.

Second, who does what? Mining companies do the extraction and production activity. They also had to present sustainability reports to the State and negotiate compensations with the communities (Hernández and Newell, 2023, p. 13-14). The State negotiates the lithium extraction rate and intensifies "value from its extraction and processing along the supply chain" (Ibid., p. 10). Also, it is responsible for environmental monitoring and oversight, and it should support indigenous communities' right to sovereignty and autonomy in their ancestral territories (Ibid., p. 12). Local communities adapt to this new economic scenario by being wage labourers for mining companies or by providing services to working immigrants. Moreover, they change their daily habits because of the economic, social, and environmental transformations produced by the

extractive activity. Indigenous communities also organize the Council of Atacameño People “to protect its environmental and cultural heritage” (Lorca et al., p. 9).

Third, who gets what? The lithium companies get the revenues from the extractive activities. Also, they generate a fiscal contribution that comes from (1) rental income for using the Atacama salt flat, and (2) tax revenues (CFA, 2023, p. 3). Most of this revenue goes to the central state, a part goes to the local government, and the other for investigation and development (I&D) (Cofré, 2022). The local and indigenous communities benefit from the increase in their municipalities' budgets, which can improve the number of social services and reduce poverty. However, the unequal redistribution of this income can cause social conflicts (MMSD, 2002). Although the transfers to indigenous communities have increased their community development, they have “also expanded the mining industry’s capacity for social control in the area… creating tensions and disagreement within and between the communities and their organizations”. This has provoked a social break inside the indigenous communities against their authorities, questioning what means to be an Atacameño (Lorca et al., 2022, p. 9). In addition, these companies hire people from outside the locality, which increases the demand for local resources and disrupts the everyday lives of local people (MMSD, 2002).

Fourth, what do they do with the surplus/wealth? Companies do Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities for the local communities. However, these programs fragment the social cohesion in the communities, replacing traditional activities and deepening the dependency on these companies (Jerez et al, 2023, p. 17).

Local communities also experience the negative consequences of the overuse and contamination of water, and the change in their landscape. Because the political economy analysis doesn’t achieve the environmental consequences of this industry, a political ecology approach is used to study the interrelations between nature, the local communities, and extractive activity. The lithium extraction activity overuses water, an “estimate is that it requires half a million gallons of water to produce 1 ton of lithium” (Lunde Seefeldt, 2022). This is “destroying the salt flat and with it, the entire territory, including both human and non-human beings” (Hernández and Newell, 2023, p. 15), and hampers the practice of agro-pastoral activities (Jerez et al., 2023, p. 13). This environmental damage comes from a lack of scientific knowledge, and

the unrecognition of indigenous knowledge of the conditions and well-being of the salt flat (Ibid., p. 14).

With these analyses, we have demonstrated the social, ecological, and development consequences of the lithium industry. From a social perspective, this industry has broken social relations inside the community, questioning the decisions of the indigenous representative groups and what it means to be an Atacameño-Lickanantay. From an ecological perspective, the overuse and contamination of water in the ecosystem have reduced the possibilities to practice local economic activities and have affected their daily life activities. From a development perspective, this mining activity and the CSR create dependence from the localities to the companies and force incorporation of their activity into modernity practices.

These consequences reinforce the dependent relationships between the localities and the market of lithium. Lithium is commodified because it's necessary for the transition to green capitalism. This new 'opportunity for development' for the Chilean economy only rises because of the relevance of lithium for the global elites (Smith, 1979, p. 248). And lithium, like other natural resources, has a high price volatility. This generates a risky situation for local development. At a national level, Chile has a countercyclical fiscal rule to reduce the impact of price volatility, which reduces the risk of slipping into the course of natural resources and falling into crisis. Nevertheless, this industry generates high levels of dependence in the local communities, being the most affected by a possible lithium crisis. This has happened before with coal mining, where a big portion of the local communities are dedicated to mining activity and were the most concerned when these industries closed. The new National Strategy of Lithium announced a project of value addition among the supply chain and the participation of the communities in each stage of production, it needs to be seen if these new projects reduce the dependency that exists in this industry.

In conclusion, the economic pressure for a change in the energy provision driven by the 'green capitalism' over the extractive economy of the countries in the Global South, has deepened the dependency relations between the global elites and the localities next to the Atacama's salt flat. Lithium mines have been called 'green extractivism' because of their use of renewable energies and their contribution to reducing carbon emissions (Mejia-Muñoz and Babidge, 2023,

p. 5). This rhetoric underestimates the ecological and social impact of lithium extraction, which increases the economic dependency of local communities on modern development. Local communities cannot develop their agriculture or any other economic activities because of the high water usage of mining industries. Consequently, people are forced to sell their labour to mining companies or other mining-related economic activities to live in this new modern reality (Hernandez and Newell, 2023, p. 16). This reinforces dependent relations between the global elites and the Global South, where marginalized and indigenous communities are living the consequences of green capitalism development. Furthermore, this case study highlights the relevance of carrying out a political economy and ecology analysis of different development policies being promoted in the Global South to identify and eliminate colonial rationales and start creating a process that promotes and protects minorities and their self-determination.

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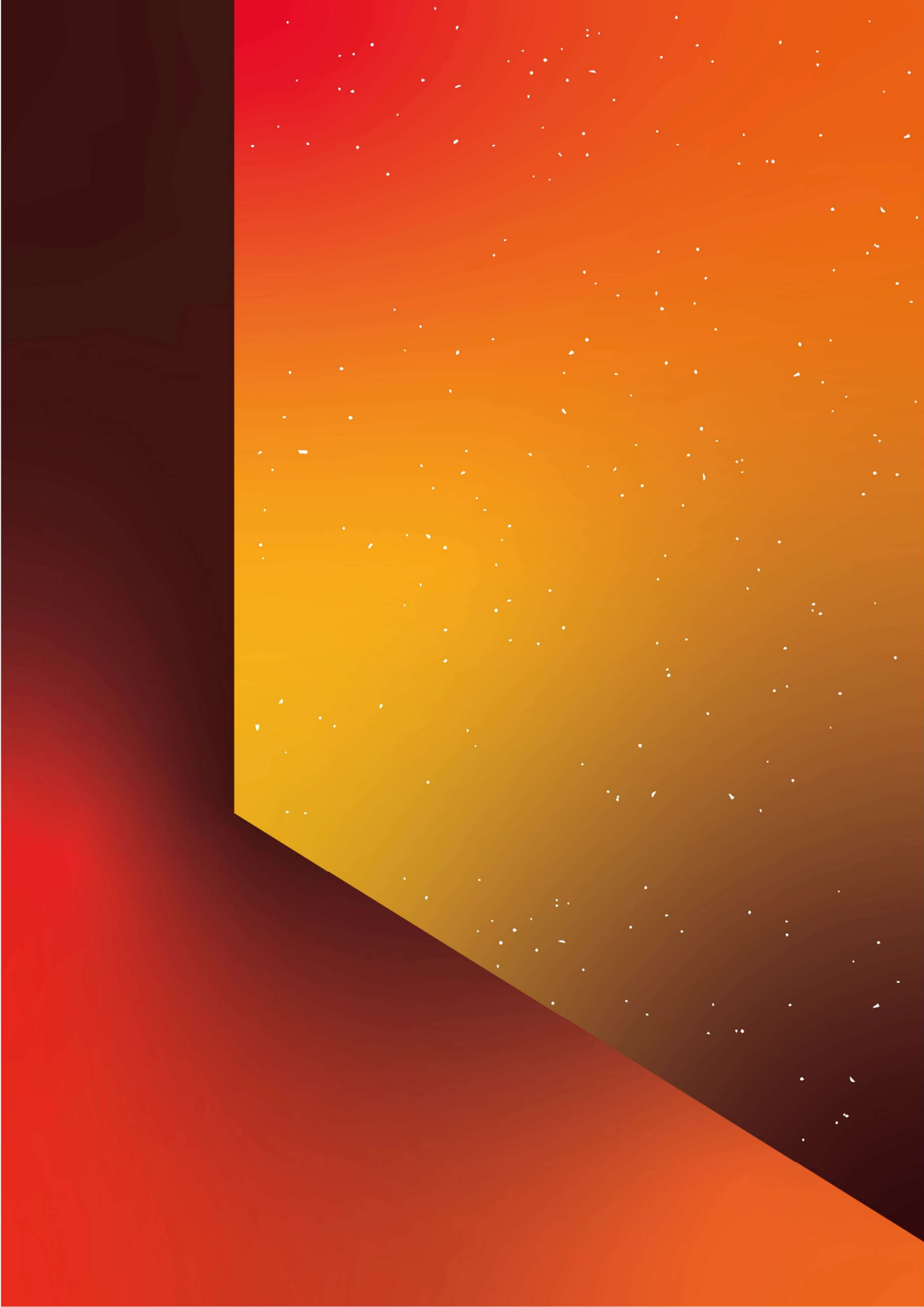

Local communities in El Darién, facilitation or solidarity?

Tatiana Piñeros Rodríguez. SPD. Colombia

Introduction

Each year, thousands of migrants cross the jungle of El Darién on their way to North America. Consequently, this region has become increasingly involved in the supply of different services to transit migrants. The theory of the *migration industries* argues that actors are involved in migration through activities of security (or control), solidarity, and smuggling (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013). These activities can be identified in the interactions of local actors with transit migrants in the region of Urabá. Evidence has suggested that an actor can engage in migration-related activities corresponding to more than one of the mentioned categories. As such, the essentialisation of migration industries' actors and their roles and contributions does not respond to reality.

This essay seeks to show how solidarity migration industries' actors can be located in a grey zone that escapes academic abstraction's understanding depending on different circumstances, especially in the case of el Darién, located in the Urabá region of Colombia. I will focus on the drivers of locals' actions and their relation to the local context of Urabá - a poor, violence-stricken region with deficient state presence- especially in what refers to migration-driven local development. First, I describe the migration-development nexus and the migration industries theory. Subsequently, I contextualise the Darién's role as a major transit migration passage, and describe local communities' engagement with this issue and its local impacts. Thirdly, I explain how and why local communities are located in a grey zone between facilitation and solidarity and show how these behaviours can be understood as countering the global north's domination of migration governance.

The Migration-Development Nexus and the Migration Industries

Traditional development studies have essentialised the migration-development nexus as linear and either intrinsically negative or positive (Kothatri, 2023, p. 80) (De Haas, 2019, p. 26). This approach reproduces "all kinds of hierarchies, privileges and inequalities" derived from Euro/Western-centric/colonial understandings of mobility that play in the global north's favour (Kothari, 2023, pp. 80 and 85) (De Haas, 2019, p. 23) (Geiger and Pécoud, 2013, p. 371). The reduction of this as a cause-

and-effect unidirectional nexus fails to understand and explain - how countless phenomena intertwine when migration and development meet. In fact, the nexus is neither linear nor symmetrical, as migration is "generally less likely [than assumed] to fundamentally alter the deeper political and economic structures of origin and destination societies" (Portes 2010 as cited in De Haas, 2019, p. 28).

Some have even argued that:

> "Migration alone hardly removes structural development constraints, and, even though it does often benefit individuals and communities, it [cannot] be blamed for underdevelopment nor be expected to substantially foster development[.]" (de Haas, 2012; Geiger and Steinbrink, 2012). (Geiger and Pécoud, 2013, p. 370).

The migration-development nexus is a two-way street that is mutual and interdependent (Kothari, 2023, p. 82). In fact, migration and development are only two interacting factors within a much larger and complex network. Understanding and addressing them as such will allow us to be er respond to the needs of all actors involved in them.

The massiveness of the migration phenomenon has involved various actors, such as the state, private sector, nonprofits and NGOs, and local communities in different ways, creating some sort of industry. Hernández-León conceptualised the *migration industries* as

> "the ensemble of entrepreneurs who, motivated by the pursuit of financial game, provide a variety of services facilitating human mobility across international borders." (Hernández-León, 2008, as cited in Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 6).

Indeed, this theory advocates for a comprehensive conceptualisation of the - (il)legal and/or (in)formal - social infrastructure connecting origin and destinations in a migratory circuit, and their articulation and interaction with actors in the demand side of the international migration process (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 5). In addition, this theory advocates for the recognition of the agents, the industry's high level of sophistication, and their contributions to the different stages of international migration (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 6).

Further developments have pointed that not all intermediaries of the migration industries engage in them exclusively driven by financial gain and that others do not engage within it through the provision of a service, but more so through the control of migratory flows (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 6). This means that overlapping actors engage with migration either through its facilitation or its constraining (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 10).

Consequently, three types of activities have been conceptualised within this framework: security (control), smuggling (facilitation), and solidarity (rescue) (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 6). Most importantly, we must recognise that these activities are not necessarily independent of each other, but often overlap in grey areas in which one or more actors' motivations are difficult to identify - and isolate (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 6). This is precisely the case of local communities in the Urabá region, who have become increasingly involved in the migrant industry, as will be explained below.

El Darién: a Transit Migration and Local Development Hub Through the Migration Industries' Lens

The jungle of el Darién, located on the border between Colombia and Panama, is an unavoidable step for most international migrants that want to reach North America. Each year, the number of migrants crossing it increases; in 2022, about 270.000 persons from all over the world were registered entering Panama from the Colombian Darién (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 15). The jungle has been portrayed as *the jungle that kills* (Sarrut et al., 2023) because despite being one of the major transit spots between South and Central America, it is not adapted for such endeavours. In fact, once at the Panamean side of the border, migrants have described it as hell and have stated that had they known what they were to face in the jungle, they would have never engaged in its crossing (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 31). This is not only due to nature's intrinsic inclemency, but also to the role of local actors engaged in the business of migration in one way or another.

These include of course the local and indigenous communities, the Colombian and Panamanian governments (as well as the US's, through the externalisation of its borders), NGOs, and, especially on the Colombian side of the border, armed paramilitary groups, particularly the Clan del Golfo or Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (Sarrut et al., 2023). These actors engage in

facilitation, control, and solidarity activities, but the role of the AGC has acquired especial relevance given their territorial control over drug - and thus, human - trafficking routes (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 25). This control has been particularly expressed within the solidarity and facilitation networks; to whom the Clan charges an extortion, called *vacuna*, in order to allow their operation (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 23).

Migration came to the Darién progressively; at first, it created a certain apprehension in the community, but with time, it became an increasing part of day-to-day life (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 20). Locals have adapted to the human, social, and economic impact that flows have had on the region. In a region with high poverty and violence rates and precarious state presence, the tragedy of migrants - as some call it - has become an opportunity for work and survival for a large portion of the local population (AFP, 2023). Although tourism and drug trafficking remain important activities, migration has replaced them since 2022 (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 25).

Here, logistical and financial organisation is usually community-based while paramilitaries set the pace for migrants' transportation (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 25). This is a clear example of how migration can foster local development and vice versa. In fact, the more transit migration comes, the more the community will engage in offering migration-related services; and the be er and wider the services are, the more migrants will use that route (Sarrut et al., 2023, pp. 22-23).

In 2016, Panamanian authorities closed the border, and thousands of people - mostly Cubans - were stranded in the city of Turbo, just before the jungle (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, p. 26). Being pressured by the Colombian government to voluntarily leave the country or risk being deported, they found themselves in an impossible situation (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, p. 29). The community offered them shelter, and donated goods from food to clothes (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, pp. 26, 143-144), without expecting anything in return.

More generally, the community has self-organised in order to help migrants in any way they can. Yolanda is affiliated to a Christian organisation and helps migrants by providing useful information and even hosting those she identifies as vulnerable, such as sick people and families with young babies (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 23). Similarly, don Héctor, like many who wander the beaches

and the dock, has adapted his house in order to welcome migrants (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 22). Others, in the face of poverty and scarcity, undertake roles as guides within the jungle path or at least part of it (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, p. 157); and some have even adopted the connotation of *coyote* (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, pp.
175-177).

These actors may be categorised as intermediaries of the migration industry that has installed itself in the Urabá. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are all the same in terms of motivations, goals, and networks. Some local expressions of solidarity have been identified as *altruistic* when they are not profit-oriented, such as those offered to the Cuban migrants and by Yolanda, and even by officials of key spots, such as the dock's coordinator (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 23, 158). Others are mainly driven by profit gains and can be provided under the approval of the Clan del Golfo or independently, which carries some risks, such as the services of guides and *coyotes*.

However, this is hardly the whole story. Altruistic expressions of solidarity/facilitation have been overshadowed by those associated with illegal organisations (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, p. 143-144). This has implied the criminalisation of all activities related to transit migration, whether or not mediated by money and/or them being associated with paramilitary groups (Valenzuela-Amaya, 2019, p. 143-144, 150, 158). Although this approach is based on a homogenisation of these activities, the truth is that not even the actors involved in them are able to clearly discern them. For example, the Clan mistook Yolanda's services as *chilinguiar*, which refers mainly to *coyotes* and guides, and asked her to pay a *vacuna*, which is why she had to emphasise her *benevolent* position (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 23).

The roles exercised by intermediaries are usually essentialised and reduced to a simple deviation - the irregular crossing of the border (Bouagga, 2021, as cited in Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 16). Hegemonic political discourse and media coverage tend to mainly focus on this aspect (Bouagga, 2021, as cited in Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 16), which overlooks not only migrants' agency, but also the complex system that operates in the Urabá as a consequence of the drastic increase of migration flows. These dynamics are not easy to track and identify given that they involve actors of all natures, profiles, and motivations.

The omnipresence of irregularity and illegality in the Urabá region has given rise to the concept of *redes*; networks consisting of different things - yes, things - within the migration industries (Echeverri Zuluaga and Ordóñez, 2023). As such, Echeverri Zuluaga and Ordóñez (2023) found that "[...] *redes* point to a highly organized criminal structure whose tentacles reached even the most intimate spheres of everyday life" (Echeverri Zuluaga and Ordóñez, 2023, p. 5).

The concept of *redes* is treated as an open secret that "serves different purposes in giving a name to multiple practices that are in some cases, much simpler, and in others, more complex than the actions of clear-cut criminal networks" (Echeverri Zuluaga and Ordóñez, 2023, p. 2). This can be considered as a natural consequence of the ever shifting dynamics in bordering spaces, but also to the illegal actors making sure that the routes and connections between migration and other irregular industries remain in the shadows.

Similarly, based not only on the intersection that exists between the regular and the irregular, but also that which exists between Colombia, the jungle, and Panamá, Sarrut et al. (2023), argue that the migratory context in the Urabá can be catalogued as a fuzzy regime (p. 26). Located between territorial control by armed groups and/or paramilitaries, and the state's capacity,

> "This system reveals organised local intermediaries caught between a delegating government and unavoidable parastatal control, making visible the different analytical layers of intermediary roles, between state and non-state, and on a local, national and international scale." (p. 18) (author's translation based on the original article).

In fact, the utility of theories such as the *migration industries* is only partial in the sense that it is not able to account for the different dynamics that might exist on site in each part of the migratory journey at the local, national, and international level. As Lucht (2013) affirms, "[s]ocial reality is a lot more messy and appears to transcend such categories [...]" (p. 187). The migration industries theory - at least on its own - only provides us with a limited understanding of how solidarity *networks* - and for that ma er, also security and smuggling activities - variantly operate on the Colombian side of the border.

Local communities and transit migration in El Darién: beyond the migration

industries

The ambiguity of solidarity behaviours in the Darién has countless facets, such as the (un)intended counter-global-north development and agency that it fosters within intermediaries and migrants, here, particularly in the Colombia-Panama border. Development and migration regulations have been hoarded and one-sidedly designed to meet their agenda, leaving "li le room for [...] strategies that would benefit less-developed countries"(Geiger and Pécaud, 2013, pp. 371-372). These policies enable a migration that leaves global racial and gendered division of labour unchallenged, allowing for a geographical but not political or socio-economic mobility (Geiger and Pécaud, 2013, p. 371).

Transit migrants and intermediaries have emerged as agents of *globalisation from below* through their negotiating abilities, social ascent aspirations, and set-up of new solidarity and sociability forms (Bayart, 2007, as cited in Lucht, 2013, p. 186), which contest global power dynamics. Such agency can be considered as a resistance against the global north's hoarding over global governance.

For example, paramilitary protection of drug-trafficking routes also used for migration purposes (Sarrut et al., 2023, p. 23) counters the global north's stance not only in relation to migration but also narcotics. Similarly, members of the community have even sought to help migrants reach their final destination, located a half continent away from el Darién (Valenzuela, 2019, p. 144), countering US' migration approach one migrant at a time. These actions, however small and whatever their motivation is, are a thorn in the side of the global north.

Similarly to what Wur (2020) identified in Central America, local communities in el Darién and most migrants have experienced violence and displacement to some extent, which explains a good part of the solidarity that the former express towards the la er and vice versa (Valenzuela, 2019), and which surge in the intersection of those experiences with vectors of race and poverty. These inter-group shared subjectivities can give rise to expressions of healing and resilience that enhance not only the agency of migrants themselves but also that of transit communities (Wur , 2020, pp. 937-938). This, by enhancing their symbolic and political power at the local and global level (Wur , 2020, pp. 938-939) in a way that counters a Western hegemonic power over migration dynamics (and many others).

Conclusion

Solidarity expressions from below in el Darién are elusive to theoretical understanding. Consequently, the essentialist lens of migrants as helpless and facilitators/intermediaries as ruthless criminals loses its utility - because it falls short of reality. This is not to say that those scenarios don't exist, but to recognise that the range of migration-related scenarios is much wider and diverse than purist *migration industries* approach shows. This case allows us to understand how in spite of "nation states [separating and displacing] suffering to remote places, while transforming social and political responsibilities into individual choices" (Lucht, 2013, p. 187) local communities leverage on the shared subjectivities of these experiences of precariousness to structure their operation juggling between solidarity and profit-oriented facilitation, and everything in between. The elusiveness of solidarity in this context is strategic; it allows some actors to hide their activities and others to make an somewhat - altruistic living.

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Surviving the Storm: Enhancing Ethiopia's Competitiveness through Leveraging Export Diversification to Compete with China Trade Dominance

Mengistu Alemu. ECD. Ethiopia.

Key Messages

- Like other African countries, Ethiopia faces complexities of global trade dynamics, particularly from China.
- Ethiopia requires a comprehensive strategy prioritizing export diversification to compete effectively with China's trade dominance.
- This strategy involves increasing the types of exporting of products and shifting away from reliance on traditional agricultural commodities export to value-added products export.
- This strategy needs to create a conducive business environment through infrastructural development and technology investment to promote domestic and foreign investors.

Introduction

Trade and integration into the world economy have proven to be powerful means for countries to promote economic growth and shape the nations' fortunes (IMF, 2001). International trade enhances economic development and structural transformation by overcoming resource scarcity barriers and market and technology limitations (Henderson et al., 2018; Teignier, 2018).

However, significant challenges exist alongside the benefits of trade and globalization, particularly for developing countries. Besides bad trade practices, such as protectionism, tariff barriers, and subsidies, unfair competition can impede market access and distort trade advantages (Uwazuruike, 2013; Wu, 2016). The rise of China as a global economic powerhouse has brought both opportunities and challenges to international trade dynamics, especially in Africa. While China's investment, infrastructural projects, and demand for commodities can have a significant impact on the economic growth across the continent, concerns have been raised about the impact of China's trade practices on Africa's industrialization, competitiveness and future trade (Malkin, 2018; Odongo, 2014; Schoeman, 2008; Zeleza, 2014). Like other African countries, Ethiopia faces challenges in

terms of global trade dynamics, mainly due to China's dominance in trade. As one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, Ethiopia seeks to maintain trade benefits to drive sustainable development and reduce poverty. However, the asymmetrical nature of trade relations with China, characterized by a significant trade deficit and dependence on primary commodity exports, underscores the need for a strategic response (UNCTAD, 2023).

Hence, Ethiopia requires a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes export diversification to compete with China's trade dominance and unlock its full economic potential. This strategy involves shifting away from reliance on traditional exports, such as agricultural commodities, towards value-added products and emerging industries. By diversifying its export base, Ethiopia can enhance competitiveness and tap into new markets with higher value-added goods and services.

This policy note summarizes the findings from the empirical examination of the relationship between Ethiopia's export diversification and the amount of China's exports to Ethiopia. Specifically, the findings underscore how an effective export diversification strategy, especially for value-added exports, can help to compete with excessive exports (trade dominance) of China.

Summary of key findings

Figure 1 illustrates the trend and relationship between the export diversification of Ethiopia and China's exports to Ethiopia. Before 2000, Ethiopia's export diversification declined while exports from China to Ethiopia increased. This trend reversed between 2000 and 2010, with Ethiopia's export diversification increasing while China's exports to Ethiopia decreased. This trend also reversed between 2010 and 2015. The negative relationship between Ethiopia's export diversification and China's exports to Ethiopia is also clearly seen since 2015.

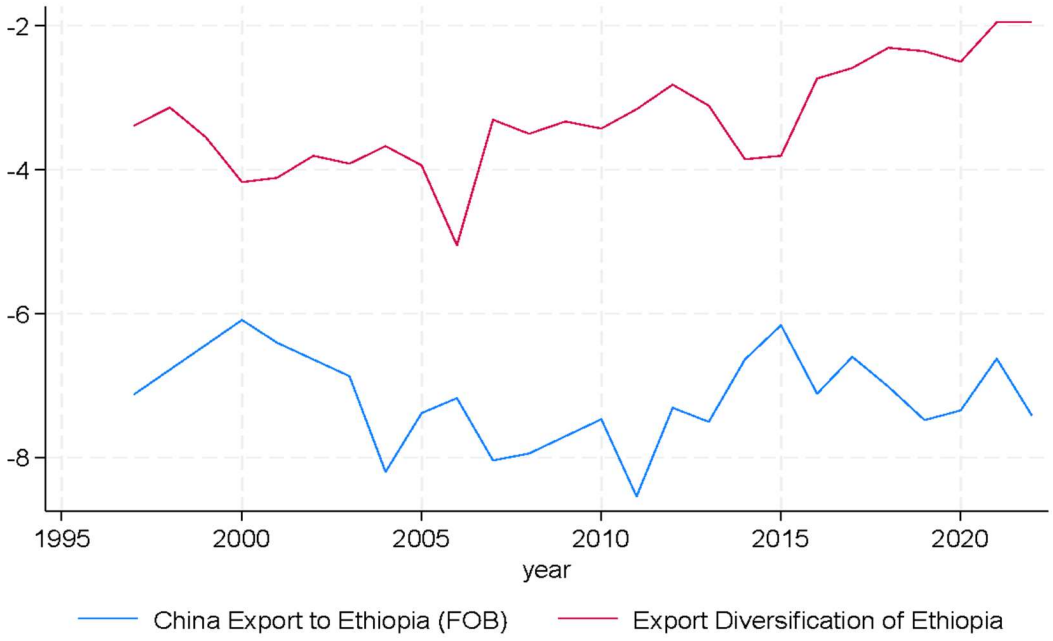

Figure 1 Ethiopia's export diversification and China's exports to Ethiopia

Data source: https://comtradeplus.un.org/

Note: The negative numbers are due to price deflation and log transformation (where the logarithm of small numbers becomes negative).

The result of the simple linear regression model also confirmed the negative relationship between the export diversification of Ethiopia and China's exports to Ethiopia (Table 1). The result shows that the export diversification of Ethiopia reduces China's exports to Ethiopia. Specifically, as Ethiopian exports increased by one percent, China exports to Ethiopia at FOB value decreased by 32.10% (Column 1). I also confirmed the validity of this finding using data on the import of Ethiopia from China, and it remains valid. As can be seen from the result (Column 2), the import of Ethiopia from China reduced by 33% for a one percent increase in Ethiopia's export diversification.

Moreover, the export diversification of Ethiopia for value-added products had a more pronounced effect on China's trade export volume to Ethiopia. Specifically, a one percent increase in the type of value-added products exported by Ethiopia leads to a 59.60% and a 68.8% reduction of China exports to Ethiopia and Ethiopia's imports from China, respectively.

Table 1. Impact of Ethiopia export diversification on China export to Ethiopia

	(1)	(2)
	China Export to Ethiopia	Ethiopia Import from China
VARIABLES	(FOB)	(prim)
Ethiopia export diversification	-0.321*	-0.330*
	(0.130)	(0.168)
Ethiopia export diversification (Value added)	-0.596*	-0.688**
	(0.288)	(0.230)
Ethiopia's real GDP (2015 price)	4.748	-2.581
	(4.197)	(3.146)
China's real GDP (2015 price)	-11.10	-18.45***
	(7.178)	(4.608)
China Population	84.89	-40.74
	(188.1)	(152.3)
Ethiopia population	-42.09	59.78
	(61.65)	(132.8)
Constant	-4,022	36.85
	(3,813)	(6,838)
Observations	17	16
R-squared	0.677	0.971

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Data source: https://comtradeplus.un.org/

Note: All variables are in logarithm form; the terms' FOB' and 'prim' refer to the free on board and primary values, respectively. For normalization purposes, the import of Ethiopia from China and export diversification of Ethiopia are measured as a proportion of total Ethiopian imports and exports, respectively.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The empirical analysis presented in this policy note underscores the importance of export diversification as a strategic tool for Ethiopia to mitigate the challenges posed by China's excessive exports. The negative relationship between the export diversification of Ethiopia and China's exports to Ethiopia suggests that enhancing the export variety, especially value-added products, can effectively improve the competitiveness of Ethiopia and help to reduce the adverse effects of trade, particularly from China. Hence, by prioritizing export diversification initiatives and significantly increasing the export of value-added products, Ethiopia can improve its future trade position and promote sustainable economic growth. By fostering a conducive business environment, improving infrastructure, investing in technology, innovation, and human capital development, Ethiopia can enhance its capacity to produce and export high-value goods and services.

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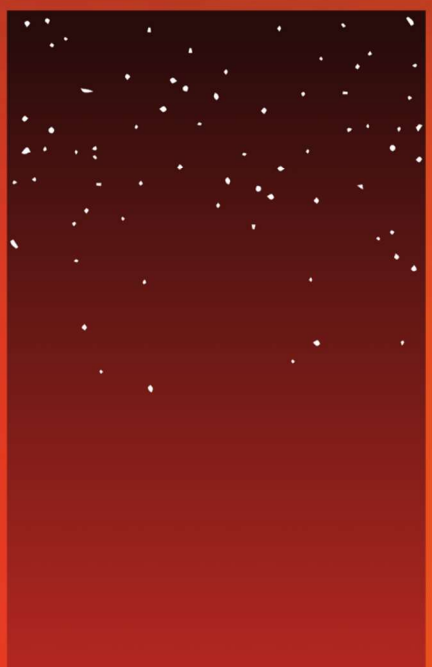

Examining Decoloniality as a Filipino: A Personal Work in Progress

Nathan Galvez. GDP. Philippines

Introduction:

"Before the Spanish came, we were savages." That such a comment could come from the mouth of a relative of mine, who had a substantial educational and professional background and was in the midst of his Master's, was definitely jarring. But the more I reflected on why it shocked me so, the more I realised it mirrored my own earlier perspectives on my country and the mindsets and (often pro-Western) biases that I continue to struggle with today. Had I not been given the resources and opportunities to examine these preconceptions (a privilege not shared by many), they may have remained unexamined. They also reflect coloniality's enduring legacy that my home country, the Philippines, continues to struggle with despite nearly a century of "independence."

The Philippines experienced almost 400 years of colonisation by Spain, the United States, and briefly Japan in a period lasting from the early 16th to the mid-20th centuries (Wiss, 2022). From language to religion and even beauty standards, the influences left behind by these mostly Western nations continue to pervade the country's society to such a degree that one might wonder what an actual Filipino identity is and whether one even exists—a question I have often asked on a personal level. Although I am always left with more questions than answers, the lens of decoloniality is one I have found extremely useful in examining this issue.

This essay, thus, aims to briefly explore the concept of decoloniality and its applicability to the Philippine context as well as my own personal experience as a Filipino and entrant into the field of Development.

Decoloniality Defined

Decoloniality is an umbrella term for the field in which coloniality is analyzed critically and in practice (Icaza 2023a). As such, it cannot be properly defined without discussing coloniality. "Coloniality" differs from "colonialism" as the latter refers to a "political and economic relation"

subordinating the sovereignty of one nation to another, while the former refers to the resulting "patterns of power" that have emerged through colonialism "...that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 32). The implication of this is that the colonial experience is still very much present in the everyday lives of individuals and groups and continues to exist long after former colonies have achieved supposed independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Colonialities of power (arranging dynamics to the benefit of white Europeans and capitalism and marginalisation based on the constructed concept of race), knowledge (a Eurocentric approach to generation and legitimation of knowledge that excludes other sources), and being (dehumanisation based on race, which was used to justify atrocities like the slave trade) have shaped and continue to shape people's experiences and realities (Escobar, 2007).

Besides the all-encompassing influence of coloniality on the lives of individuals, another contention of decoloniality is that modernity itself (previously said to be founded on the principles of the Renaissance, Reformation, and the Enlightenment) was, in fact, built on the West's colonisation of the rest of the world (beginning with the conquest of the Americas and the Atlantic slave trade in the late 15th century) and the extractive and oppressive systems and actions that came with these (Escobar, 2007). This clashes with the idea that modernity and its accompanying ideals were a Western concept brought to the colonies. In truth, those from the colonies were involved in the process from the beginning, albeit subject to violence and suffering, as modernity itself is inseparable from coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Thus, even the field of Development Studies, which in its earlier post-war forms strived for modernity for former colonies in the mold of the West, is compromised by this dark history (Escobar, 2007b).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), describes the "decolonial turn," which describes the primarily epistemological nature of decoloniality, holding that political, cultural, ontological, economic, and social liberation are dependent on the acceptance of other epistemes or ways of knowing from the Global South to counter the hegemonic modern Eurocentric model. Icaza (2023a), notes that the object of decoloniality is not to be the "dominant discourse," but instead to allow voices that have not been heard or have been silenced to have their say and their stories and perspectives recognised.

The Philippine Context

Given its long history as a colony of Spain and the United States –indeed, Westerners first reached the islands in 1521, not long after Columbus' voyage to the Americas, (Elizalde, 2022) – the Philippines can be said to be a part of the coloniality project that brought about modernity. Composed of hundreds of tribes affiliated with various neighbouring kingdoms prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the islands that would later become the Philippines were already a trading hub where Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Malays engaged in economic and cultural exchanges (Elizalde, 2022). The consolidation of these territories for the purposes of ease of management was primarily a colonial project, as even the name "Philippines" came from the name of the prince of Spain (Knowlton, 1964). Indeed, the very notion of an independent Philippines as an entity that led to The Revolution in the late 1800s was a process initiated mostly by local elites who were primarily Western-educated and modeled their ideals on those of the Enlightenment (Arcilla, 1991). Ironically, then, from a decolonial perspective, modernity—a system inherently tied to coloniality—was part of the founding principles of the new nation that sought to gain independence from its colonisers.

Decoloniality is therefore a perfect lens to challenge this coloniality, which is inseparable from the very identity of the current Philippine nation-state. The islands' history is rife with examples. These include an examination of pre-colonial Philippine society, challenging the dominance of Christianity, the current religion of approximately 85% of the population (Mapa, 2023), which highly influences much of the Filipino mindset. An example of this would be the Babaylan, powerful shamans who were revered in society and were either female or transgender, whose marginalisation demonstrated patriarchal gender roles as a Western-imposed logic on the islands' inhabitants (Yarcia, de Vela, and Tan, 2019). Another example is the efforts at placemaking by indigenous people after displacement from their ancestral lands (Yambao et al., 2022). Yet another is the country's role as a sex tourism hotspot, often associated with the brothels that sprang up near U.S. military bases (Wiss, 2022), embodying coloniality's dehumanisation of the non-white body as described by Icaza (2023b). Finally, the continued destruction of the Philippines' rich biodiversity in the name of capitalism echoes coloniality's separation of human from nature, the latter's exploitation as described by Icaza (2023a).

A Personal Lens

How, then, does this all connect to my personal experiences and the quote that struck me so much? Maybe it can be examined from the perspective of what being Filipino has meant to me so far. Although my background as a member of the Philippine socio-economic elite has given me an experience quite different from the majority, seeing my own life through the decolonial lens reveals my coloniality-infused personal epistemology.

As a child, I consumed Western books, toys, and media (I grew up speaking English instead of Filipino), ingraining a sense of Eurocentric superiority within my subconscious (I still catch myself rooting for specific characters in movies and books, for example, reflecting this bias). I was raised Catholic, and it was only in my university years (during which I ironically attended a Jesuit-run institution) that I began to seriously question the Church's worldview, especially when it came to the concept of gender and the LGBTQ+ community. Although I was more aware of the continued influence of former colonisers (primarily the United States) on my country's economy and foreign policy, it was only when I took up Development Studies in my undergraduate years, that I began to appreciate its pervasiveness in all aspects of Filipino life (a primary reason for my continued interest in the subject). Even my skin color, which is considered fair in the Philippines, and my Chinese-Spanish mestizo descent have granted me both privileges, both personally and professionally. Finally, this reflection brings up the disturbing (to me) question of why I should even question a status quo that I benefit from (at least materially) and, thus, my own role in the continued propagation of coloniality.

Conclusion:

Where does this leave me in the end? It has led to a realisation that to be properly immersed in my chosen field of Development, I must never stop questioning what I know and, more importantly, how I know it. Decoloniality, then, becomes a tool for not just societal but also personal examination necessary to combat the reality imposed by modernity and coloniality that excludes and oppresses so many.

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Farmer's Market: Alternative Marketing System against Capitalism

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Introduction

A community economy is an economic system run by local people and for local people, where goods and services are provided to the community through social responsibility and social solidarity (Newman, Lyon and Philp, 1986; Acquier, Daudigeos and Pinkse, 2017). This can again be presented as an alternative market principle to the conventional capitalist market system, where the market is viewed in the light of society and community rather than just profit. This paper will argue that an alternative market, run by the farming community, can be more consumer-friendly and sustainable than the capitalist one, using the example of the 'farmer's market' in Bangladesh. To establish the arguments this paper will try to elaborate in the context of Bangladesh, on how the capitalist market system makes money without engaging the producers and consumers in the structure. On the other hand, the small-scale farmer's market has broken the syndicate system of the traditional market system to determine product prices and establish a direct relationship with the consumer. Farmers are doing this in a communal approach where as a community they are making the product price list as well as producing fresh vegetables for the consumer community. To describe the relationship between farmers' markets and the community economy, this paper will be divided into three parts, excluding the introduction and conclusion. With a brief theoretical explanation, the next section will elucidate that, similar to the capitalist market system, a farmers' market is also a market system, and this system is closely associated with the community economic notion. In the next section, a brief history of the Farmer's Market will be used to describe that it was historically an integral part of the community, but the invasion of the capitalist market disrupted this system. Finally, with the analysis of the 'farmer's market' in Bangladesh, will try to explain how it aligns with the community economy.

From Theory to Practice: Understanding ‘Farmer’s Market’ through Community Economics

The economy does not emerge in a vacuum; rather, it is embedded in society and maintains a delicate balance between the state, the market, and the community (Lie, 1991). On the contrary, the classical economic perspective underscores the importance of economic liberty, wherein individual choices are free, the market is competitive, and the state's role is to ensure justice and order in monetary activities (Smith, 1776). However, both the market and the state, along with the community, are crucial for maintaining social cohesion and upholding the moral fabric (Smith, 1761). Nevertheless, barter has been a part of society since its inception, and this exchange occurs through kinship ties, various social relations, and diverse social networks. However, the existing exchange system, excluding social relations, prioritizes 'profit' alone. This system has been in place since the 19th century and onwards, leading to a reduction in the significance of social relations in the economy (Usher and Polanyi, 1944). In this economic system, those who controlled the means of production (bourgeoisie) gained profit by exploiting the labour of the workers. This asymmetry leads to the exploitation of labour, the extraction of surplus value, and the alienation of the working class (Cartelier, 1999), and this is the nature of capitalism. In this economic system, the market is controlled by a few individuals who manage and influence it, rendering the role of the state negligible. Consequently, the market has come under the control of monopolies and syndicates (Schumpeter and Nichol, 1934). However, it is essential to distinguish that markets and capitalism are not synonymous concepts. Capitalism represents a market system among various market types (van Staveren, 2020). Furthermore, in certain market systems where direct transactions occur between sellers and buyers, the category of 'intermediary' has no impact. One example of such a market system is the 'farmers' market' in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, farmers typically cultivate vegetables on their land; however, for marketing, they must rely on middlemen. These middlemen, locally known as *'paikar*,' form a syndicate that dictates the prices of vegetables, leaving farmers with no bargaining power. Consequently, farmers are compelled to sell their products at the syndicate's predetermined rates. Following the purchase of products, middlemen resell them to retailers at a significant profit, and subsequently, retailers sell the products to consumers. To eliminate the 'middlemen' layer, the concept of a farmers' market is introduced. In this market, farmers can sell their products directly to the consumer. They can negotiate with consumers for the price and earn a good income. The

market is operated by them, so there is no hierarchy, and most importantly, they can make their own decisions about their business. The next section will discuss the history of the farmer's market in a global context.

A Brief History of Farmer's Market

Historically, the farmer's market was a social communication and goods exchange place for local inhabitants. It started in Egypt over five thousand years ago but there was no money transaction. Moreover, between the 1800s and 1900s, the farmer's market was not only a business hub but also a meeting place for rural and urban communities. However, this system was disrupted in the early 1900s, as competition for capitalist control and profit began in the food production and distribution system. Historically, in the 1950s and 1960s, improvements in communications and the proliferation of grocery stores began to make farmers' markets disappear. However, since the 1970s, these farmers' markets have been started functioning in the United States and become popular with the general public (Sam, 2020). By discussing the farmers market of Bangladesh, in the next section, this paper will attempt to establish a relationship between the 'farmers market' and the idea of 'community economy.'

'Farmers' Market' and 'Community Economy' of Bangladesh: Exploring the Interrelationship

The farmers market is a joint initiative program run by the Directorate of Agricultural Extension, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, City Corporation, and Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, under the project of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. It started in June 2021, from Mirpur 6, Dhaka, and this farmers market starts every Friday at 7 am (Suvo, 2022). This is a place where farmers bring their products (mainly vegetables) to sell the customers directly. The farmer who grows the crop on the land is the seller here. Fresh vegetables come directly from farmers' fields in this market. As a result, farmers are getting an opportunity to sell their produce directly in the capital itself.

Here, more than thirty farmers come to sell their products, and they collectively decide on the prices of their products. In the early morning, farmers from different areas arrive at the market,

discuss the prices of common goods, create a price list, and display it on the price board in front of the market. They reach these decisions through consensus, and no one interferes in their decision-making process (The Business Standard, 2022). However, the farmers had to sell their vegetables earlier based on the fixed price which is made by the syndicate. Then the middlemen sell the product to the retailers by adding a profit to these sold products, and the retailers also retain their profit on the product before selling it to the consumer. As a result, the consumer has to buy the product at twice the original price, and the producer (farmers) is deprived of the market price. On the other hand, through the syndicate, the middlemen retain the surplus between the purchase and sale price as profit. With this process, the syndicate controlled the market. The farmers are now selling the produce at a slightly higher price than before, but consumers are acquiring it at a lower price than the market. Therefore, it can be said that, unlike the prevailing syndicated market system in Bangladesh, the newly started farmers' market has eliminated middlemen and ensured farmers' decision-making power and bargaining processes. The influence of middlemen in the present market system results in farmers selling produce at lower prices, and consumers end up buying stale vegetables instead of fresh ones at higher prices. This is because vegetables pass through several hands (middlemen, retailers) from the farmer's field to the consumer, consuming a significant amount of time. During this process, numerous chemicals are used to keep the products fresh, posing harm to the body. However, through farmer's markets, consumers can purchase fresh vegetables directly from the farmer (Shah, 2021). Therefore, the 'Farmer's Market' program makes it possible to ensure safe food for consumers. The market has become a weekly social gathering place for the local people as well as providing fresh vegetables.

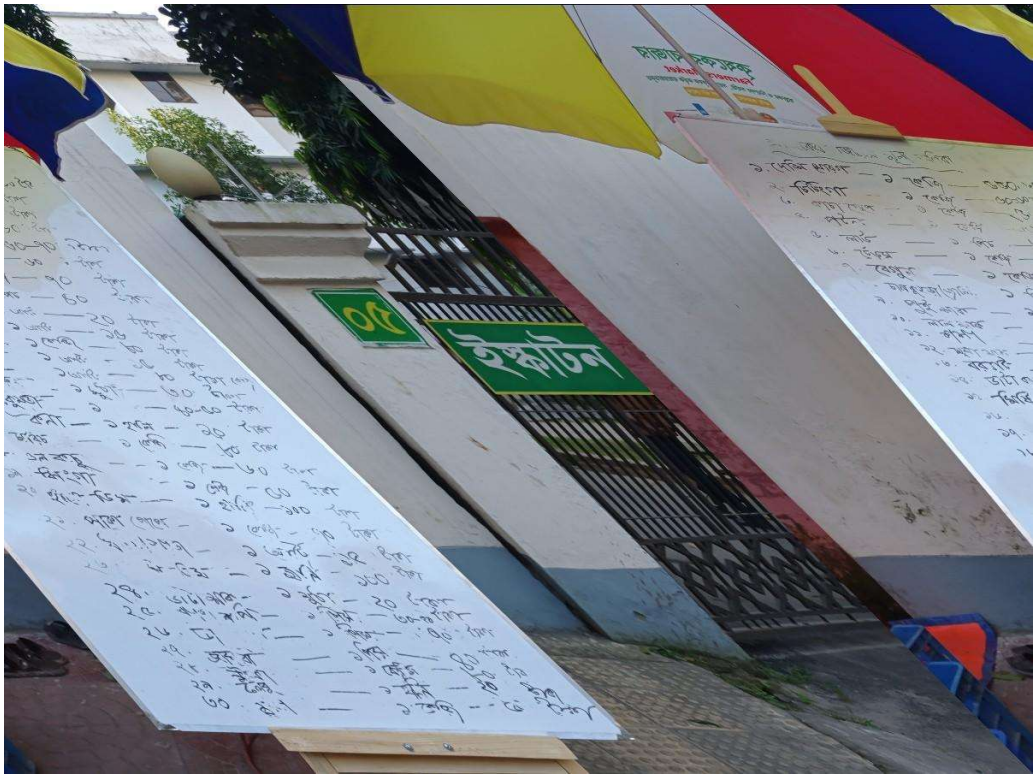

Figure 1 Price list set by farmers

Source:https://www.tbsnews.net/bangla/%E0%A6%AB%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%9A%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0/news-details-120090#lg=1&slide=7

Conclusion

The farmer's market is a push for the capitalist market system. So, it can play a vital role in the community economy of Bangladesh by providing small-scale farmers with direct marketing opportunities, reducing reliance on intermediaries, and strengthening local economies through the sale of locally grown produce. These markets also serve as social hubs, fostering community engagement and supporting the consumption of healthy, locally sourced food.

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A Peace of the Clover: a Temporal Analysis of the Good Friday Agreement

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Introduction

The late 1960s marked the beginning of 'The Troubles'. For anyone not familiar with the Northern Ireland Conflict, this might appear as a curious statement, one with a nearly cavalier British attitude. However, this sentence summarises a complex interplay of historical, social, and political factors, including disputes over national identity, religious denominations, and civil rights. The history of this conflict can be seen far in history, with some drawing lines all the way back to the Anglo-Norman invasion. However, considering the scope of this essay, the origins of this particular strife is rooted in the historical grievances stemming from Ireland's partition in 1921. Within 'The Troubles', several key parties struggled for the future of Northern Ireland. Specifically, the Nationalist or Republican groups, primarily comprised of a Catholic denomination, and the Unionist or Loyalist groups, who were, in contrast to the Nationalists, primarily composed of Protestants. The former seeking a unification between Northern Ireland (NIR) and the Republic of Ireland (IE), whereas the latter struggled to remain part of the United Kingdom (UK). The conflict was characterised by violent clashes, bombings, and paramilitary campaigns, leading to significant loss of life, injuries, and sustained societal division (O'Connell, Aoláin and Malagón, 2024).

This conflict attracted global attention, with many parties attempting to prompt peace negotiations, as well as conducting interventions. Amongst these were the British, Irish and US (indirectly) governments. After three decades, on the 10th of April 1998, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) was finally signed, marking a pivotal moment in the peace process, and effectively ceasing 'The Troubles'. To this day, the GFA is considered a landmark achievement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, illustrating the potential for negotiated settlements in deeply divided societies. It has served as a model for other peace processes worldwide (O'Connell, Aoláin and Malagón, 2024).

Through the resolution of ‘The Troubles’, an engaging dialogue opened as to the elements that led to its success. Additionally, as the success now spans over two decades, and the conflict had far-reaching historical roots, the concept of 'time' emerges as a particularly critical factor. This leads to this essay’s guiding question: "How does the concept of 'time' influence the dynamics of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the Northern Ireland Conflict, as seen through the Good Friday Agreement?" Through this question, ‘time’ will be explored, not just as a chronological progression but as a complex interplay of historical awareness, collective memory, and anticipatory reconciliation that shapes the contours of peacebuilding efforts.

Consequently, the essay design is purposefully meant to dissect the multifaceted role of 'time' within the Northern Ireland peace process. This essay examines 'time's' role, analysing its influence on historical narratives and future aspirations within the peace process. The structure unfolds from conceptualising 'time', applying theoretical insights, to a focused case study on Northern Ireland, culminating in broader peacebuilding implications.

Section 1– Conceptualising Time

To properly conceptualise time in peacebuilding contexts, this essay builds upon the work of Lederach (2005). His extensive engagement with peace processes unveils a nuanced understanding of 'time' that transcends mere chronological progression, emphasising instead the richness of historical consciousness and the vitality of collective memory in crafting sustainable peace. He further elaborates upon this concept by integrating his firsthand experiences, noting a quote by a colleague that stated: “You have the watches, but we have the time” (Ledarach, 2005, p. 135). This highlights the divergent perceptions of 'time' between cultures. This, as a dichotomy, reveals a perception of time, not as a linear commodity to be managed but as an expansive, multidimensional space where the past, present, and future are intrinsically connected.

Furthermore, this perspective can be broadened by integrating the work of Vitón (2023), who introduces the concept of spatiotemporal factors in peacebuilding, asserting that both 'time' and 'space' crucially enable or disable local agency. His analysis advocates a distinctive understanding of 'time' and 'space' beyond their traditional conceptions, highlighting their impact on women's agency in the Mozambican peace process. He posits, "Time is 'an essential aspect of

understanding the relationship between agency and change'...including temporality in the study of agency allows to consider historical contingency in actions and changes" (Vitón, 2023, p. 4). This approach not only complements but deepens Lederach's theoretical framework by contextualising it within specific, contemporary settings, highlighting how the historical and spatial dynamics shape peacebuilding efforts.

This bi-integrational framework around the concept of 'time' provides a more holistic understanding of 'time' in peacebuilding. It reveals how historical legacies and spatial conditions, alongside the active reconfiguration of social and political spaces, significantly influence local agency. This insight is crucial for peacebuilders, suggesting that effective conflict resolution and reconciliation processes must account for the temporal and spatial contexts within which they operate. Additionally, it is insightful to recognise how these dynamics have played a crucial role in the peace process between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Such an approach challenges peacebuilders to consider how the past informs the present and shapes the future, advocating for strategies that recognise and utilise the multidimensional nature of this elusive concept we so recklessly refer to as 'time'.

Section 2 – Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, this essay shall establish the relevant theoretical perspectives on peace building, temporality and agonism. Firstly, through the work of Behr (2011), whose work centres around a criticism of traditional peace concepts; rather he focuses on the importance of cultivating differences rather than abolishing them for sustainable peace. Or, as he puts it:

> "Peace, more or less, as the abolishment, surmounting, and supersession of differences...is expected to be resolved or eliminated and to become united into one pacified and unified scripture of morality, ideology and rationality." (Behr, 2011, p. 1)

Through this encompassing statement, Behr contributes to broader theoretical discussions around pluralism, difference, and peace. This goes beyond the traditional universalistic and homogenising approaches to peace and adopting an approach that embraces and cultivates differences. The applicability of this theoretical approach can best be embodied by the following statement found within the GFA, in which the parties affirm "their commitment to the principles of partnership,

equality and mutual respect and to the protection of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights in their respective jurisdictions;" (UN Peacemaker, 1998, p. 30) In essence to say parties can be different, yet equal.

Additionally, this essay looks to Shinko (2022), whose work on agonistic peace is deeply rooted in political theory, particularly drawing from the agonism concept. This concept acknowledges the permanent nature of conflict within politics. It seeks to channel this conflict through democratic and non-violent means. In Shinko's exploration of what emanates from this concept, namely antagonistic peace, conflict is indeed acknowledged as being inevitable. So rather she focuses on the political act of peacebuilding through contestation and engagement. The relevance of her work in the light of 'The Troubles' is perhaps best captured in Shinko stating that "Agonistic peace is a political peace denoted by the presence of permanent provocations responding to, challenging and resisting the imposition of divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums" (Shinko, 2022, p. 1400). This quote is apt for the topic at hand, as peace in Northern Ireland was not established through a wholesome sentiment of mutual love, but rather a search for the end of violence as a means to resolve the conflict.

The last facet of the theoretical perspectives incorporated in this essay is put forth by Ruette-Orihuela (2023). She examined the post-conflict violence in Colombia, thereby highlighting the continuation of violence against indigenous leaders despite peace agreements, and attributing this to necropolitics within peacebuilding. This necropolitics of peacebuilding refers to the analysis of how post-conflict policies can perpetuate inequality and violence, particularly against indigenous leaders, by examining the intersection of race, space, politics, and colonial legacies in shaping peacebuilding outcomes (Ruette-Orihuela et al., 2023). This is of particular interest to analysing the Northern Ireland peace process by highlighting the importance of considering historical injustices, societal structures, and the need for an inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of conflict and supports all community members equitably. Based on this framework of exploring peace and these necropolitics, it is again made painfully clear that this essay has to maintain a broad temporal view, as well as a broad perspective on those harmed and benefitted by the process of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, before and after the GFA, regardless of the chronological perspective that is embedded in this phrasing of the problematique.

To conclude on the theoretical perspectives, these have shown different segues to be taken towards understanding and achieving peace. Behr's emphasis on embracing differences, Shinko's focus on the inevitability of conflict and its democratic resolution, and Ruette-Orihuela's analysis of post-conflict violence and its roots in necropolitics, collectively offer a multifaceted approach to peacebuilding. This highlights the necessity for this essay to acknowledge the historical contexts, societal inequalities as well as incorporating an inclusive and broad approach. Through utilising these lens, the Northern Ireland peace process can be critically examined, ensuring that the pursuit of peace is informed by a deep understanding of the underlying issues at play.

Section 3 – The Northern Ireland Peace Process

This section shall now utilise the previous two sections to explore the Northern Ireland Peace Process, specifically focusing on the role of 'time' in the dynamics of peacebuilding and reconciliation. It shall integrate the insights from Lederach, Shinko, Ruette-Orihuela et al., and Behr primarily through the GFA.

The GFA offers a profound understanding of how historical grievances and collective memory have shaped the peace process in Northern Ireland. Through its structure and provisions, this document reflects a thorough consideration of the temporal dimensions of peacebuilding. Among these are measures for decommissioning arms and reforming policing as direct responses to the historical mistrust between communities and the state security forces, a mistrust seeded in events like Bloody Sunday (UN Peacemaker, 1998). This highlights Lederach's emphasis on the interconnection of past, present, and future in the peacebuilding process by showcasing an effort to reconcile the past and the contemporary present.

Additionally, Shinko's theory of agonistic peace manifests in the peace-making process, notably through the establishment of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains, as highlighted in the ‘Information Note from Ireland to the Article 50 Working Group’ by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. Through this commission and similar mechanisms noted in the document, it is sought to heal the wounds of the past but also to provide a platform for ongoing dialogue and contestation, acknowledging conflict's permanence within politics. This

approach aligns with the agonistic peace framework, emphasizing the importance of democratic engagement in navigating differing historical narratives and perspectives. Moreover, the evolving nature of the peace-building process is underscored by subsequent agreements and modifications to the original GFA, underscoring the notion that ‘peace’ unfolds over time rather than at a single moment. In this context, Vitón's focus on spatiotemporal factors further accentuates the significance of both geographic and temporal dimensions in the peace process, particularly in establishing 'spaces' for dialogue and reconciliation that enhance the temporal journey from a troubled past towards a hopeful future, resonating with both Lederach and Shinko's insights.

Incorporating Behr’s theoretical insights on the importance of cultivating differences within peace processes is done through the analysis of a U.S. Congressional Research Service report on the peace accompanying challenges. The report outlines initiatives that spawned from the GFA, which facilitated cross-community engagement and dialogue, exemplifying the practical application of Behr’s theory by fostering environments where historical and cultural differences are not just acknowledged but actively integrated into the peacebuilding framework (Archick, 2021). Through this form of engagement, the unique contributions of each community home to Northern Ireland are recognised.

The last theoretical perspective that prompts analysis for the purpose of this essay is Ruette-Orihuela's et al.’s concept of necropolitics. Applying this concept to the GFA, illuminates the intricate balance between institutional reform and the deeper, ongoing challenges of systemic inequality. For example, as the information note reads: “A new Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and a new Equality Commission for Northern Ireland were also provided for and established pursuant to the GFA.” This represents both critical steps towards addressing the power dynamics that underpinned the conflict, as well as a need to extend beyond agreements to reach true peace and encompass real transformation of necropolitical structures into ones that affirm life and promote equitable participation for all communities. Through Ruette-Orihuela et al.’s lens, it is shown that, although the GFA laid the groundwork for peace and reconciliation by institutionalising equality and human rights, the success of these efforts in dismantling the root causes of inequality and exclusion remains a complex and ongoing challenge.

It should be noted at this point that the theoretical frameworks also offer limitations. For example, the concept of agonistic peace is still countered by the occasional flare up of violence in relation to the current status of Northern-Ireland as part of the UK (BBC News, 2023). This indicates that purely through the establishment of means to democratically deal with conflict, conflict does not simply disappear, contrary to this key notion of Shinko. Furthermore, despite the application of Behr's theory on cultivating differences, the U.S. congressional report underscores the ongoing challenges in fully realising cross-community engagement (Archick, 2021). The persistence of these challenges indicates that the practical application within peace processes like the GFA can fall short of transforming these 'theoretical' ideals into proper sustained social and communal harmony.

Additionally, regarding the relationship between time and peacebuilding, it has been discussed how Lederach's theory held validity and was shown to have been applied to the peace process. Considering the relative success of peace in the Northern Ireland, it is indeed valid to assume that Lederach's notion of a temporal relationship with peace, holds up to a certain extent. However, this relationship, while theoretically compelling, encounters practical limitations when applied to the intricacies of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. In the practical application within the GFA, the framework seems to struggle with fully integrating this temporal complexity. Specifically, while the GFA and its follow-up mechanisms aim to address past injustices and lay the groundwork for future harmony, an observable tension between the aspiration for a peaceful future and the persistent shadows of historical grievances that continue to influence present interactions among communities remains.

Conclusion

Unveiling the particular facets of the peace building process of Northern Ireland, through the lenses of time, historical grievances, and the myriad theoretical frameworks presented, this essay has endeavoured to dissect the intricate dynamics of peacebuilding and reconciliation. The GFA stands as a testament to one of the best attempts at peace building in recent history. The insights of Lederach, Shinko, Behr, and Ruette-Orihuela et al. unravelled not just why this peace process was as successful as its proven to be, but also which underlying temporal dynamics took and are still taking part in this process.

In conclusion, the GFA reflects a deep consideration of the temporal dimensions involved with peacebuilding. It addresses both historical grievances and collective memory. There is a presence of agonistic peace, as per Shinko, and accompanying platforms that give space to heal past wounds through ongoing dialogue. Additionally, initiatives that acknowledge and integrate historical and cultural differences showcase Behr's insights on the importance of cultivating differences, as partially substantiated by the success of the GFA. Furthermore, Ruette-Orihuela et al.'s concept of necropolitics applied to the GFA highlights the challenges of transforming systemic inequality and promoting equitable participation for all communities.

In terms of the limitations of this essay's research, it should be noted that if the scope of the research had been bigger, the historical grievance could have been better displayed to create a more complete picture of what should be taken into the future to be reconciled. Furthermore, this research was hindered by a reliance on available documents and literature to interpret the complex dynamics of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. This could have restricted the depth of analysis regarding the lived experiences and nuanced perspectives of those directly involved in or affected by the conflict and the peace process. Ideally, further research would go on the ground and be done qualitatively.

Lastly, as previously indicated, the applied theories still come with their limitations, which is unavoidable in this branch of sciences. This, however, does not take away from the lessons either. Peace processes such as the one mediated through the GFA give hope that this can be replicated in its own spatial and temporal contexts all over the globe. To this point, a critical lesson emerges; when it comes to conflict, the last thing to be absent ought to be patience, as human time can hardly be measured by the means of a watch, why try?

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The Negative Impact of Cooperate Concentration (food traders) on potato farmers within the Netherlands.

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Introduction

Development is not a natural or linear process. However, it is a complex transition that every country undergoes, majorly influenced by the historical nature of unequal global power relations shaped by globalization. Globalisation exacerbates existing inequalities between different regions due to its high economic integration and interdependence driven by neoliberal policies and principles, what Bernstein argues as "neoliberal globalization" (Bernstein, 2015, p. 15). For example, international agreements such as World Trade Organizations and multi-corporations emerging, having more authority than the national governments hence creating power imbalance. Therefore, a need "for new alternative forms whether explicit or implicit regulations" (Friedman, 1993, p. 29) to address this power imbalances.

However, proponents argue that neoliberal globalization instead stimulates economic growth through "division of labour which promotes productivity" and giving customers more choices at reduced price (Smith, Marshall and Young, 2003, p. 85). This paper looks at food traders within this context and the effect of their work of buying and selling the food products as farmers concentrate on production, which allows each party to focus on their strengths/comparative advantage leading to increase in output and productivity as well as profit and welfare gains. As a result, the paper ponders on the question - do they consider the inequities that arises due to the injustices that the farmers experience or they are just profit driven?

The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to investigate the extent to which food traders have affected potato farmers and the struggles the farmers go through. The essay will be divided into two interconnected themes; Cooperate Concentration in the food chain of Dutch potato and

impact on potato farmers. However, before delving into the themes, let's look at the concept of Food Regime Analysis.

Concept and Debate of Food Regime Analysis (FRA)

The concept FRA developed by McMichael and Friedmann in the 1980s, offers a framework to understand the relationship between food traders and farmers in the larger context of international agricultural system as it shed lights on power dynamics and economic structures to world capitalism. It explains the possible eras of "capital accumulation and capitalists' transitions, agriculture playing a key role" (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989, p. 95).

In contrary, Araghi (quoted in McMichael, 2009, p. 283) critically reexamines the concept of FRA and argues for an alternative formula that considers "theory of global value relations" that emphasizes, aspects of class relations and labour exploitation. For example, solely concentration of power relationships by food traders hides the exploitative practices faced by farmers at the ground level. The essay will therefore build more on Araghi's work as it highlights on the injustices experienced by farmers in their dealings with food traders. FRA is divided into three – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Food Regimes as seen below.

1st Food Regime (Preindustrial Agriculture)

It was UK-led in the period between (1870-1914). It was cantered in the European imports of wheat and meat from the settler states such as Canada, USA and Australia. It was marked with a period of free trade and culmination of colonialism as emergence of globalization too was evident (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989, pp. 96-100).

2nd Food Regime (Industrialized Agriculture)

It was led by US hegemony in the period of 1945-1973, in the post war world economy. Government played a key role in shaping agricultural policies and practices. It offered state protectionism of the domestic agriculture against international competition through policies such as tariffs and import quotas to ensure national food security and rural development. The key

tension was national state verses the rising multinational corporations (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989, pp. 111-114**)**.

3rd Food Regime (Global Agribusiness worldwide)

McMichael argues that the present time is represented by a different variation of food regime called "corporate food regime" (McMichael, 2009, p. 282). It rests on neoliberal world order and characterized by emphasis on privatization and corporatization of agriculture, putting farmers at the risk of dependency from the food traders. For example, food traders in form of supermarkets like popular Albert Heijn in Netherlands now control a vast market portion and profiting from reorganizing the food supply chain by delivering fresh/healthy foods or selling their own products. Nevertheless, Friedmann (2005) argues that there has been an increase in social movements against cooperate concentration to address the issues of ecological concerns.

Furthermore, Friedmann (2005) argues that these social movements are creating another capitalism as they advocate for sustainable agriculture like organic farming or fair trade within the capitalist framework. Question is, do they incorporate the grassroots organizations concerns too, or they just advocate for what benefits them and that's it? For example, the farmers protest that was witnessed on 1st October 2009 in Hague.

Theme I: Cooperate Concentration in the food chain of Dutch potato

Studies show that potato is important as it can be used as a food security crop due to its high adaptability, diverse distribution pattern and its current cultivation and demand (Devaux et al., 2021, p. 691).

It is the major export crop of Netherland to European Union market. Its high productivity is attributed to favourable conditions (climate) and its expansion of the markets internationally, (e.g., USA and South America markets). Owing to concentration process, the Dutch potato company has discovered that primary supply of potatoes lies within few large corporations (food

traders) making competition a matter of vertical networks as opposed to individual farmers selling their produce. (Rademakers and McKnight, 1998, pp. 206-209).

Secondly, food traders hold a significant power in shaping potato agricultural practices. This is through their increased market dominance and control over supply chain as they limit choices for consumers. (Devaux et al., 2021, p. 700). This aligns to (Grain, 2008a, p. 4) that, "powerful co-operations in the global food systems, have the ability to manipulate the market and financial system to their own profit". Regardless of the consumers feelings leaving them with no choice but to purchase food at whatever price it will cost. Furthermore, grain gives examples of renown large grain corporations such as Cargill and ADM, who openly reported their enormous profits by the end of the global food crisis. These companies saw an increase staggering profits of around 70% as compared to the precrisis in 2006. This was unusual given the context of global food crisis.

Thirdly, food traders contribute to, "imperfect price transmission" (Assefa, Kuiper and Meuwissen, 2014, p. 425) owing to downstream market power in the sector of the food supply chain. For instance, the Dutch potato firm where the food traders have relative bargaining power of the chain actors. This therefore implies that, despite the farmers market power, the price is still determined by the food trades as the farmers might not be able to improve how changing in farm level-pricing will affect consumer pricing (Assefa, Kuiper, and Meuwissen, 2014, p. 425). This relates to what McMichael (2009) refers to as "agflation" (p. 283). They buy potato at lower price but sell it later at high price making profits from the price differential.

Overall, the paper supports the argument that cooperate concentration especially the food traders have more power than the farmers. However, the question that lingers my mind is that, is it possible for farmers to operate without the food traders? If so, will they find it easy to produce, at the same time look for market, negotiate with the buyers and even organize for logistics of transportation? Or rather should there be policies guiding the concentration of cooperation operations?

Theme II: Negative Impact on potato farmers

Firstly, the dominance of food retailers and fast foods has led to increased demand for potato firms to produce more of potatoes with higher quality and different varieties at lower costs for consumers. To meet these demands, most companies had to expand their production leading to mergers, acquisitions and takeovers. This meant that other firms that could not adjust well were either bankrupt or sold off (Rademakers and McKnight, 1998, p. 212). Consequently, small scale farmers were marginalized from agricultural production which aligns to (McMichael, 2009, p. 284) argument of "Transnational Cooperation used to replace family and peasant farmers" for industrialized agriculture.

While industrialized agriculture has led to high yield productivity, there has also been contestations about environmental sustainability and health concerns due to genetic modifications as Genetically Modified Organisms.

Secondly, it has led to social inequity by farmers losing their lands to the cooperate people, "accumulation by dispossession" as argued by Harvey (2003, cited in McMichael, 2009, p. 284). According to Berkhout, Berkum and Reben (2018), this was evident in the Netherlands too in 1995 as 60% of the farms, especially those in the sandy soil of eastern and southern provinces which were smaller than 10ha being consolidated by large farms. "The small farms were considered not viable and therefore the government encouraging large farms by means of land consolidation" (ibid, p. 11). This resulted to small-scale farmers looking for alternative job opportunities and work in the industrial sector.

Thirdly, based on the chat we had with the two large farmers, on our study trip to Flevoland, farmers lack autonomy in decision making over their own farming practices. During the interview, a question arose about whether farmers decide on what to plant on their own or is it dictated by the food traders. The response revealed that traders sometimes dictate what type of food to plant whether organic or inorganic depending on what is more profitable in the market. Additionally, lack of autonomy arises due to dependence on external input, market control and

sometimes technological dependence (Belving and Berg, 2023). Furthermore, food traders have control over pricing and may enforce strict quality standards that can pose challenges to farmers.

However, studies show that, most companies prefer to engage in individual contract with the large farmers rather than through the food traders. Though vegetable products and fruits companies would prefer to deal with food traders as intermediates (Van and Brijman, 2004, p. 3).

Conclusion

In summary, cooperate concentration raises the concern of social inequity as there is power imbalance between food traders and farmers. This affect the farmers in the sense that, their bargaining power is reduced, have limited market access, there is information asymmetry as the food traders are well informed about the market and its dynamics therefore engaging in exploitative practices such as price manipulation to the farmers who do the hard work of production. Consequently, this power imbalance creates dependency for the farmers. Moving forward, policy makers should come up with measures that promote fair distribution of power and support farmers to be able to make their own decisions on their farming practices.

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Post Development and Body Politics

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Post development refers “to an era or an approach in which development is no longer the central organizing principle of social life” (Demaria *et al*, 2023, p.61). It questions the centrality of development in society, echoing critiques from academia to grassroots movements especially amongst “victims of development”. Post development recognizes that reality can be reshaped beyond development, empowering individuals and groups to act differently based on new definitions whiles at the same time highlighting the paradox of development by revealing the exclusion of voices, knowledge and concerns of intended beneficiaries of development (Escobar, 2007).

Harcourt, (2019) examined the vital role body politics play in post development efforts through feminist activists’ “disruptive and critical interventions”. Viewed as a canvas where “global capitalism writes is script”, bodies, as “powerful sites of cultural meaning, social experience and political resistance” can and also serve as tools in resisting capitalism’s sexist and racist structures (Harcourt, 2019, p.248).

Body politics is “the political struggles of people to claim control over their felt and lived biological, social and cultural embodied experiences” (ibid, p.247). Exploring this dynamic realm of body politics, Harcourt focus on the compelling influence wielded by protesting bodies especially of the female’s (ibid, p.247).

Embodied Activism

From sex strikes in Liberia and Kenya to protesting naked in Nigeria, women in many cultures across Africa have often sort to wielding their bodies as forms of protest against injustices suffered in society, or to force a particular course of action. Female nudity particularly among many tribes in southern Ghana is a symbolic strategy for cursing those who wronged them when they have no other ways of finding justice. In mid-2020, some women in Northern Nigeria, protested naked calling for justice for the indiscriminate killings of members of their communities by bandits. Diduk, (2004) documented the activities of the "Takembeng” a protesting caravan of

rural women in various chiefdoms in the North Province of Cameroon who uses public nudity and other behaviours that defy customary rules of decorum as part of their protesting mechanism.

Expressive Dissent

Simpa is a dance in the Dagbon kingdom of northern Ghana. It is usually performed by a group of girls or young women in a band with a male lead. The ladies dance provocatively and seductively by gyrating and twerking to rhythms and songs. Because of the lewd and tempting lyrics as well as the dance moves, it is very popular with the youth, making it a powerful tool of protest in Dagbon even in pre-colonial times. Enjoying a near absolute freedom of speech on a Simpa platform, the songs are used to make statements and criticisms of authority as well as admonishing to members of the public. This made the Simpa platform the only avenue where societal scrutiny knows no consequences, including even criticisms of chiefs– whose authorities are unquestionable

However, after contacts with Arabic traders who brought Islam to Dagbon and Christian missionaries as a consequent of colonialism, the influence of these Abrahamic religions casted shadow over Simpa, labelling it as sinful and attaching stigma to its female dancers. The dance form, once a symbol of cultural expression, was now performed by rebellious daughters, challenging the imposed narrative.

Yet, a recent resurgence questions the religious inclination to label Dagbon cultural practices as sin, sparking the revival of Simpa's popularity. Singers use songs to publicly name and shame, as well as register displeasure at actions by those in authorities. With the popularity of the Simpa because of the provocative dance moves, the songs become viral within weeks reaching every corner of the kingdom giving it an outsized influence on discourses in the kingdom.

A very recent example from 2023 illustrates Simpa’s influence on public discourse. As the cost of living soared in Ghana with inflation rates exceeding 50%, a Simpa band released "Sama Noli" (only losses/debts). The song, criticizing the government as a loss for Ghanaians especially housewives struggling to afford basic cooking ingredients such as “salt, pepper and fish” quickly went viral. The song was so popular that it compelled a response from the party of the ruling government in the region.

Thus Simpa, with its provocative and bold dance moves, stands not just as a dance but as a testament to “how bodies are shaped by cultural, economic and social relations and discourses” (Harcourt, 2019, p.245) and how bodies are dynamic forces shaping the socio-political discourses of society.

A Taboo Broken

While the concept of using nudity as a form of protest isn't groundbreaking, what sets contemporary times apart is the harnessing of the Internet and social media, as noted by Harcourt (2019).

In the Ghanaian context, this dynamic took centre stage as feminist activists’ reshaped narratives surrounding the female body in their battle against luxury taxes on sanitary products. These products, including sanitary pads, attract 20% import levy after the Ghana Revenue Authority classified them as luxury goods. In 2013, the government added a 12.5% Value Added Tax (VAT) on these products. The cumulative effect is women paying 32.5% in taxes on sanitary products, placing an undue burden on their ability to access sanitary products, with various studies revealing that many girls especially in rural areas miss school during menstruation due to their inability to afford sanitary products.

Activists fought these new taxes and levies for years, and in 2017, the newly elected government promised to scrap those taxes, but failed to do so for the next seven years. The imposition of luxury taxes and the subsequent activism for their removal is significant with the concept of post development in many ways. The taxes were introduced as part of measures because the government was cash-strapped because of huge debts incurred over the years in the relentless pursuit of development. Their persistence also underscored the influence of the powerful ‘Association of Ghana Industries’, who vehemently opposed the removal of the taxes in order to maintain the competitiveness of domestic producers of sanitary products against imported alternatives.

Traditional methods of protest yielded little progress until body politicking became a pivotal strategy. Harnessing the influence of social media, the "Don't Tax my Period" campaigns, spearheaded by women breaking the silence on menstruation – a taboo topic in Ghanaian society–

shifted the narrative. Harcourt (2019) highlights that these taboos, by "condoning and institutionalizing" these issues, perpetuate gender and other inequalities, contributing to their entrenchment in social and political spheres. By thrusting these issues into the public domain, women took control, breaking the taboo and ultimately leading to the removal of the 12.5% VAT on sanitary pads. While a small victory (the 20% import levy is still in place), it speaks volumes about the potency of body politicking.

Picture 1: "Don't Tax my Period" campaign

Source: modernghana.com

In the photo above, a woman is protesting at "Don't Tax my Period" campaign. This picture is significant as it goes against the norm of talking about menstruation in public. It borders on a taboo in many Ghanaian cultures to speak openly about mensuration, with many languages using various euphemisms to refer to menstruation.

A Fight To Be

Gender and sexuality are crucial domains of power and inequality. They are intimately linked and always working in tandem with other relationships of power. Reproductive justice advocates for autonomy over bodies and sexual pleasure as well as also seeking to end gender-based violence

and securing the right to express diverse sexualities. This aligns with the increasing focus of body politics in recent years on advocating for the right to pleasure, highlighting issues of heteronormativity and the concept of erotic justice (Harcourt, 2009).

In many countries across the world, especially in Africa and the Middle East, queer individuals are having their bodies and sexualities scrutinized and criminalized like never before. Whereas this is a matter of freedom and prison for many, for some, it is a matter of life and death, following rise of violent attacks against queers in Ghana and Uganda for example, after the introductions of more stringent anti-gay bills/laws.

Queer individuals and allied supporters have fought back for the right to be. This activism has taken many forms including many queer living openly “their truth”, and carrying out advocacy and activism particularly on social media platforms. Activists have harnessed its influence to educate the public on the bills' implications on individual rights. Many of these accounts that are anonymous, document attacks and other forms of abuses against members of the queer community. They seek to show that queerness is not an alien imposition as is the main argument of the proponents of the anti-gay bills. Notably, activist Papa Kojo Ampofo has undertaken a documentation initiative, involving interviews with “queer elders” in Ghana. This endeavour aims to chronicle their life experiences, intending to substantiate the assertion that queerness is an inherent aspect of Ghanaian/African societies and cultures.

In conclusion, bodies serve as arenas for both normalization and resistance, embodying societal norms of gender and sexuality. The cases discussed illustrate the body's role and centrality in political process and activism as a primary site of resistance against neoliberal global economic systems (Harcourt, 2009).

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‘They Called Me Babu’ Through Decoloniality Lenses

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Introduction

This essay analyses the documentary film *They Called Me Babu* (*Ze Noemen Me Baboe*, 2019) using decoloniality lenses. Directed by Sandra Beerends, a filmmaker of Indo-Dutch descent, the documentary narrates the life of a fictional Indonesian nanny, “Babu,” employed by a European family in the Dutch East Indies. The film attempts to contribute to the decolonisation of Dutch colonial history by presenting an Indonesian perspective.

While recent initiatives by Indisch communities aim to confront the legacy of colonialism, I agree with Dragojlovic and McGregor (2022) that Beerends, despite her intentions, reproduces colonial thought in her work. This essay addresses how colonial ideas manifest in *They Called Me Babu*. The discussion is divided into sections: an overview of the documentary, a critical analysis of its narrative, and a conclusion.

Alima: Fictional Babu from Indonesia

Films have the capacity to evoke empathetic understanding, described by Nussbaum as “sympathetic imagination” (Benthall et al., 2015). Watching *They Called Me Babu*, I initially felt empathetic towards Alima, the fictional nanny whose life unfolds under challenging circumstances.

The story begins with Alima fleeing her hometown after refusing an arranged marriage. She finds work as a nanny (babu) for a Dutch family, caring for their youngest child, Tjanje. In the film, Alima speculates that “babu” is a combination of *mbak* (miss) and *ibu* (mother) in Indonesian. Although fictional, the narrative is based on interviews with former nannies and their Dutch employers. Beerends combines home videos from Dutch colonial families with historical footage, voicing Alima’s story in Indonesian to create an impression of authenticity (Dragojlovic and McGregor, 2022).

As the narrative progresses, Alima's life takes her to the Netherlands, where she learns about sovereignty and independence. During her stay, she experiences equality for the first time, evidenced by her being addressed as "Mevrouw" (Ms). However, this newfound empowerment ends when she returns to Indonesia, where colonial hierarchies reassert themselves. Alima resumes her duties with no time off and limited rights.

Some Criticisms

Dragojlovic and McGregor (2022) argue that Beerends faces challenges in narrating a fictionalised nanny's story, resulting in an incomplete effort to decolonise history. Instead of presenting diverse perspectives, the film reproduces colonial stereotypes.

1. Romanticising the "loving babu"

The film reinforces the colonial trope of the Indonesian nanny as unconditionally loving towards her Dutch charges. This romanticisation is evident in Alima's intimate bond with Tjanje, whom she refers to as "my son." Beerends's use of a soft, feminine voiceover and her focus on Alima's maternal affection perpetuate stereotypes of Indonesian women as inherently nurturing.

> **Previous studies reveal stark contrasts in memories between Dutch employers and Indonesian nannies. While Dutch recollections highlight affection, nannies often recall their work as repetitive and dehumanising (Stoler and Strassler, 2000).**

Although the film briefly acknowledges these hardships, its primary emphasis remains on Alima's emotional connection with her employers, overshadowing critical narratives of exploitation.

2. The Netherlands as a "region of revival"

The film portrays the Netherlands as a progressive haven where Alima experiences empowerment and equality, implicitly framing colonial rule as a rescue from local patriarchal culture. By highlighting Alima's personal growth in the Netherlands, the narrative diminishes the exploitative realities of Dutch colonialism, which justified its rule through racial superiority and resource

extraction. This framing misleads viewers about the nature of colonialism, portraying it as benevolent rather than oppressive.

3. Bias in depicting colonial violence

The film's treatment of sexual violence reveals biases. When a Dutch colonial master assaults a young girl, the event is depicted with subdued responses from Alima, who remains silent and composed. In contrast, scenes involving Japanese soldiers portray overt sexual aggression, with Alima expressing anger and indignation.

> **This disparity underscores how the film downplays Dutch culpability while amplifying the brutality of Japanese colonialism, perpetuating colonial narratives of moral superiority (Quijano, 2000).**

The colonial matrix of power, as defined by Quijano (2000), influences the film's narrative, dictating what can and cannot be said. This undermines Beerends's attempts to present Indonesian women as visible and vocal agents of their history.

Conclusion

They Called Me Babu aspires to disrupt colonial narratives but ultimately falls short. While Beerends acknowledges colonial inequalities, her film reproduces stereotypes of Indonesian women as nurturing and forgiving. Through its storyline, dialogue, and narration, the film frames colonialism as an emancipatory force rather than a system of oppression. By doing so, it fails to reinterpret or critique the colonial legacy effectively.

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(Un)Learning Colonial Roots: The Third Gender in India

Devki Mishra. ECD. India

Context

"Kanna, don't open the door!"

Hearing my mother's alarmed voice, I stopped in my tracks with mixed emotions – confusion and curiosity. My sister who stood by me, almost defiantly, peered from a distance through the netted door and questioned, "But who is it? I keep hearing loud claps." Burning with curiosity, I stole a peek. And there they were.

Adorning colourful sarees, with a full face of make-up - a pair of women. They stood there waiting for the door to open while singing a tune which was occasionally followed by a clap. I blinked in confusion at their voice. "Amma, it's just two women," I spoke in my eight-year- old naivety. This sentence was met with an angry hush, and she told both my sister and I to run inside. She rushed to the door after taking some money out of her purse. That day, a seed of fear and prejudice was planted in my mind due to the conditioning brought in by a narrative of oppression and discrimination. It wasn't until years later that my mother explained how they "were not women, but transgender women."

Introduction

Clad in vibrant hues
Wearing their heart on their sleeves,
Dancing along the rhythm of their truth,
Humming a silent ballad of broken dreams.
(Author, Mishra D.)

The transgender community holds a historically significant spot in the tapestry of Indian culture – a

culture that was under the reign of Britain for close to two centuries. Recollecting my history classes from school, the British colonial rule was often described as a period of wealth drain. But I always wondered, does it not go beyond that? It is a period marked with oppression, but surely it cannot just be economic in nature. I also found myself questioning how Indian culture has been influenced by the colonial brutalities of the British. In what ways did the crown rule contribute to shaping perceptions of race and gender? A whirlwind of questions that once plagued my mind as a child; now, I seek answers.

Decoding Coloniality

India, owing to its rich cultural diversity and abundant resources, was once referred to as the golden bird (ABC News, 2024). It established itself with a booming economy marked by flourishing trade and commerce (Sen, 2021). And then came the period of the Crown rule. A country that held a share of 24.4% of world GDP in the 1700s, diminished to a mere 4.2% after the British rule (Aiyar, 2023). Resources from India were exploitatively used to finance the industrial revolution in Britain. As said by Shashi Tharoor, “India was governed for the benefit of Britain. Britain’s rise for 200 years was financed by its depredations in India” (Aiyar, 2023).

Is it ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ situation?

It is often disputed that the colonizers need to be held accountable for the damage they inflicted, with some proposing a token of apology, while some others demand financial reparations. But how does one put value on the colonial scars deeply etched in our everyday life? It isn’t just about the plundering of wealth. It is a profound subjugation of the body and mind.

As stated by Lugones (2008, p.3), coloniality “permeates all aspects of social existence”. Its impact goes beyond “territorial and economic benefits” (Majidi, 2020); beyond mere exploitation of material resources; it is the manipulation of the social aspects of everyday culture, particularly in the context of race, caste and gender. In addition to this, all relations between the colonized and the colonizers are shaped by a “psychological influence” created by colonization (ibid).

In order to demonstrate their privilege and control over the oppressed, those in power feel the need

to assert their biological superiority (Oyewumi, 1997, p.1). The British did this in numerous ways, one of which was to impose the European gender framework of two binaries onto Indian culture, particularly through the subjugation or rather the criminalization of the transgender community (Verma, 2022).

The Other

An Indian Context

Transgenders are not entirely unorthodox to Indian culture. Commonly referred to as *Hijras*, they have multiple other names: "(…) eunuchs, *Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis,* etc.", and hold a long history of recognition in Indian cultural practices and customs, prior to the British rule (IILS Blog, 2017). The word *tritya-prakriti* has been mentioned in the Hindu Mythology and folklore (Verma, 2022). In fact, one can even find its traces in the *vedic* and *puranic* scriptures (ibid). Often seen as people close to divinity in many South Asian countries, transgenders are believed to have the power to bless (and even curse) people (ibid). It's a customary practice that persists in India even today, where they can be spotted giving their blessings to newlyweds and newborns (ibid).

The transgender community played a pivotal role in the expansion of the Mughal empire (Verma, 2022). Holding eminent positions such as "political advisors, administrators, generals, and guardians of the women's chambers" (ibid), they held a respectable space in society. The intersex and transgender community received benefits and protections in the form of land and finances for the purpose of agricultural activities (ibid), thus ensuring their survival. And then came a period of oppression with the British rule.

Governing Gender: A Colonial Lens for the Other

The Western perspective on gender was principally guided by biological explanations, overshadowing alternative approaches (Oyewumi, 1997, p.1). But it doesn't just stop with biological differences. Rather "(…) it invites a gaze, a gaze of difference, a gaze of differentiation - the most historically constant being the gendered gaze" (Oyewumi, 1997, p.2).

Describing the transgender people as "cross-dressers, beggars and unnatural prostitutes," the British officials deemed them "ungovernable" (Biswas, 2019). The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 enforced by the British literally labelled them as a "criminal tribe" (ibid). They were prohibited from wearing

anything that did not conform to the western gender norms of masculinity – jewellery, clothing traditionally worn by females, etc. (ibid). Even their livelihood was snatched away as they were banned from performing in public (ibid); failure to comply resulted in hefty fines and even imprisonment (ibid).

To the British, the *hijras* were "agents of contagion (…)" and thus posed a potential moral threat, particularly to the male child, of being emasculated (Biswas, 2019). And thus came the worst blow - when they were separated from their children in the name of rescue (ibid). Leading a life of extreme discrimination forced the transgender community to adapt for their survival - constantly on the move while keeping their cultural practices intact (ibid). They found ways to evade law and order (ibid).

Surviving the Echoes of Coloniality

The Transgender community in India continues to live in discrimination. They are regarded as "less human", often getting abused by their own families (Price, 2022). Only in the past decade have there been a few inklings of improvement. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India gave legal recognition to the transgender community, thereby enabling them to exercise their fundamental rights, along with other benefits (Knight, 2019). Another ruling in 2019, the "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill", was enacted to improve their education and workforce status (Price, 2022). Historic? I wouldn't say so. But definitely one of the first few steps to break the shackles of coloniality. Despite these two rulings, which have their loopholes, and have been called "regressive", progress is slow with little to no improvements in the socio- economic status of the transgender community (Masih, 2019; Price, 2022).

Conclusion

The solutions to historical colonial injustice go beyond economic transactions as reparations. To begin with, a more accurate account of history needs to be integrated into our education system. In addition to this, there is a need for assistance in safeguarding and revitalizing indigenous cultures that were exploited during colonial rule. Lastly, a simple medium of opening possibilities – fostering further dialogue.

The seeds of discrimination sown by the British are deeply rooted in the Indian society, but it can't take away from the fact that the process of weeding out European gender norms has begun. Restoration of the Transgender community began with an acknowledgement through the enactment

of the two rulings. But this acknowledgement needs to be coupled with sensitization on equality of all genders. After all, we belong to the same human race.

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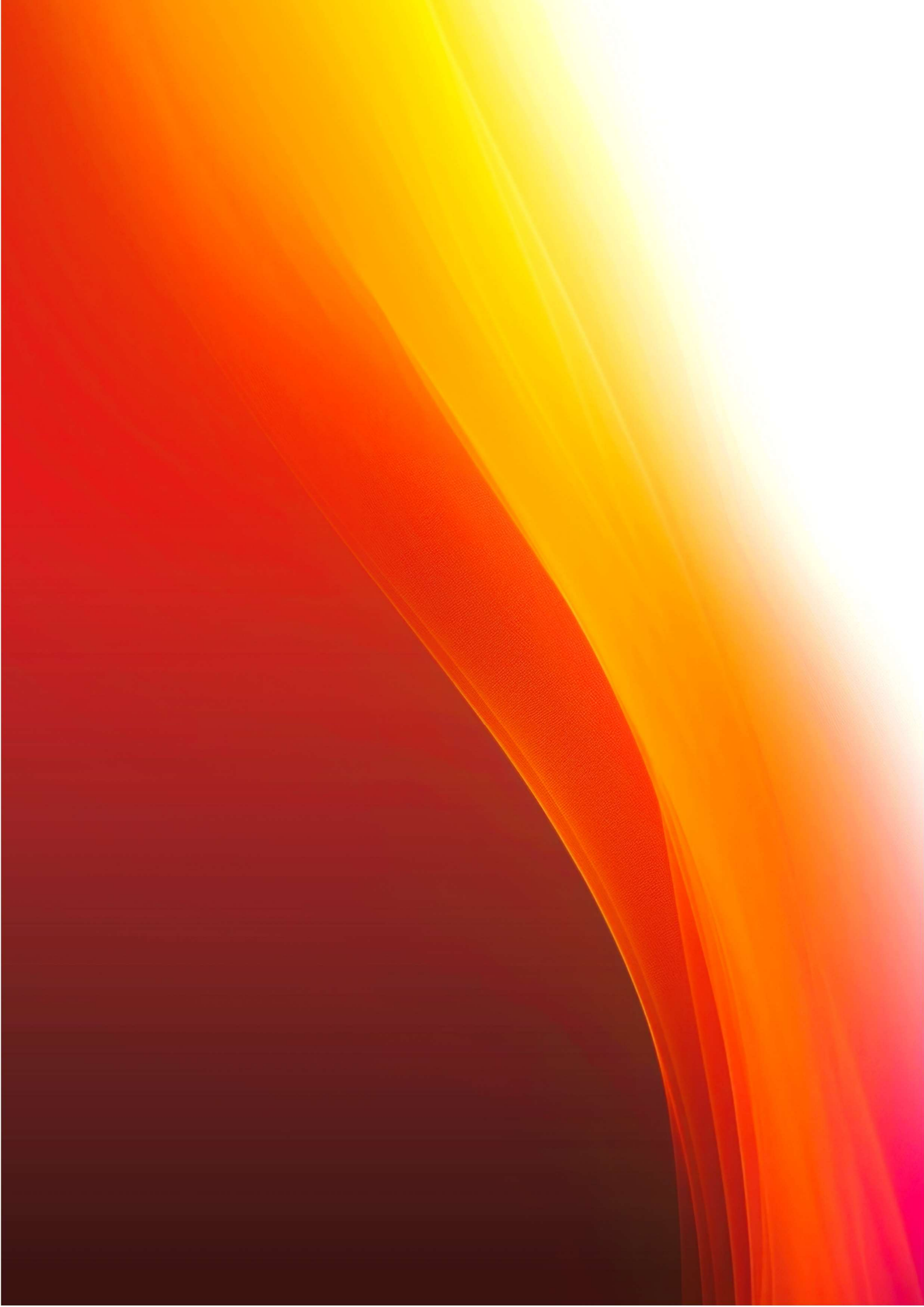


Addressing US EV Policy: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach

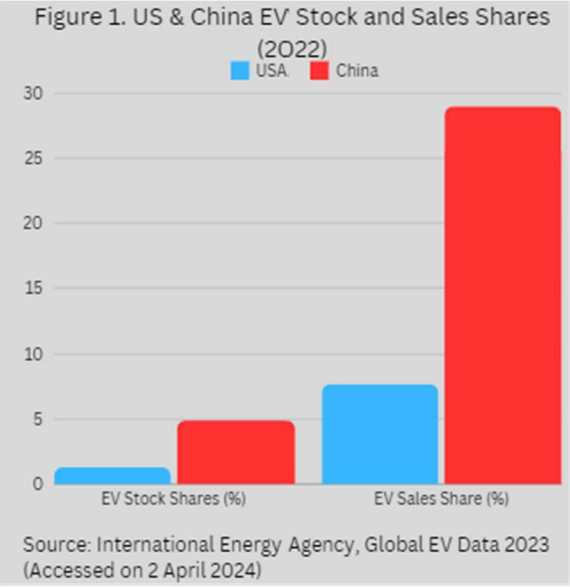
Kai Gundersen. GDP, USA

Introduction

The biggest auto companies in the US face an uncertain future. With the Biden administration committing "to the target of electric vehicles accounting for half of all new vehicle sales by 2030" (Nakano and Robinson, 2023), a rush to manufacture and sell electric vehicles (EVs) in the US market is underway.

This policy brief addresses the burgeoning debate on how to put EVs on US roadways while ensuring the long-term competitiveness of domestic automakers. We argue that the current US EV policy puts these automakers at risk. More cooperative strategies must be pursued for US firms to maintain their competitive edge in the global market.

Continuing protectionist trade policies towards China diverts attention from a more pressing issue facing the US automaker industry: the lack of domestic manufacturing capabilities within the EV supply chain. Figure 1 illustrates that the United States is lagging behind China in terms of both EV market share and sales volume. Ensuring the long-term competitiveness of its domestic industry will require a shift away from protectionist policy towards growth that welcomes knowledge sharing and resource pooling.



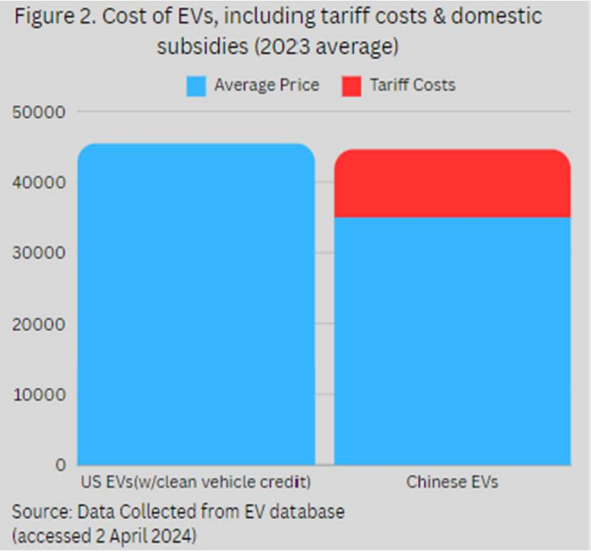
This policy brief begins with a brief overview of US-China EV policy. The next section analyses how the current policy by the Biden administration, while effectively protecting domestic industry in the short term, potentially inhibits EV sales in the long term. We advocate for a more pragmatic approach, concluding with policy recommendations to promote enduring competitiveness.

EV Policy

Trade Barriers

Figure 2 demonstrates that, despite the hefty 27.5% tariff imposed by the US on Chinese-made cars and the generous subsidies provided to consumers buying US EVs, Chinese electric vehicles might still be more affordable for American consumers.

China's dominance in the battery industry allows them to produce EVs with lower costs. Streamlined automated production lines in China contribute to efficient and cost-effective manufacturing processes for EVs. Lastly, labour costs in China tend to be lower than those in the US, further contributing to the overall competitive pricing of Chinese-made EVs (Nakano and Robinson, 2023, p. 45).



Supply Chains

The Biden administration has recently implemented the 30D clean vehicle credit regulation targeting foreign entities of concern (FEOC), notably China. The regulation stipulates that EVs incorporating battery components manufactured or assembled in China will be ineligible for the $7,500 tax credit (IRS, 2023). This restriction significantly constrains the ability of American automakers to produce cost-effective EVs, thereby impacting both supply and demand in the EV market.

Towards a More Pragmatic Approach

To achieve its energy transition objectives, the Biden administration must adopt a pragmatic stance regarding China's significant role in global supply chains, particularly in the EV market. Decoupling from China through stringent regulations, such as the 30D regulation, would likely result in slower EV adoption and fewer vehicles qualifying for tax credits.

> **Navigating the US-China EV trade policy requires a balanced approach that prioritises collaboration while safeguarding domestic manufacturing interests. By reevaluating current policies and embracing alternative strategies, US automakers can adapt to the**

evolving EV landscape and maintain their competitive edge in the global market (IEA, 2023).

Policy Recommendations

1. **Promote Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing** - Leveraging Chinese expertise and resources will accelerate domestic manufacturing capabilities. Joint ventures fostering technological advancements and efficient EV production processes will position US automakers competitively when Chinese EVs enter the market.
2. **Diversify Rather Than Decouple** - Instead of severing ties with China, embrace a strategy that expands and diversifies sources of critical minerals and components necessary for EV production.
3. **Enhance Supply Chain Resilience** - Mitigate risks associated with overreliance on a single source while promoting innovation and knowledge sharing in the rapidly evolving EV market.
4. **Invest in Research and Development (R&D)** - The Biden administration should prioritise initiatives to improve battery technology, manufacturing processes, and supply chain logistics to stay ahead in the global EV market.

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Reading Braiding Sweetgrass at a Time of Despair

Manju von Rospatt. SPD. Germany and USA

Introduction

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013, p.328) writes that experiencing "despair is paralysis". Kimmerer's generous storytelling has served as a balm to me as I find myself falling into such a paralysis, like many others, after months of witnessing people's suffering on my social media feeds, watching floods and heat waves suffocate everywhere from Dubai and Delhi to Valencia, and reading about the harrowing journeys of people on the move across the world and the inhumane indifference, violence, and deportation many face upon arriving at European borders. These crises cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as interlocking catastrophes stemming from the same colonial ignorance towards the wisdom that all beings are fundamentally reliant on each other in a web of reciprocal dependence and exchange.

I feel angry and horrified when I open my eyes to the world around me and am confronted with the seeming insignificance and inadequacy of my own actions. Kimmerer triggered me to think: How would it be to turn this horror and frustration into nurturing and loving action of reciprocity and community building where I am right now with land, more than humans, and people? Who and what am I grateful for and accountable to? If we orient ourselves towards a language of love and abundance for the earth, living beings, and the people on it, what kinds of worlds could we imagine? She asks us at this critical moment in our species' history to turn to the necessary labor of restoring and repairing "respect, responsibility, and reciprocity" towards nature and ourselves to save us from such despairing paralysis (Kimmerer, 2013, p.336). Perhaps the lessons of *Braiding Sweetgrass* can serve as a prefigurative politics to recognize our interdependence and mutual flourishing and can inspire us to engage with the world in gratitude and reciprocal action. It is this which I wish to reflect on in this brief final essay for the Global Political Ecology course.

Windigo Economy and Gift Economy

"If all the world is a commodity, how poor we grow. When all the world is a gift in motion, how wealthy we become." (Kimmerer, 2013, p.31)

This epigraph exemplifies the fallacy of our modern economic system which pillages from the natural world and exploits people in order to appease an insatiable desire for private ownership and expanded commodities under the logic of development. Similarly, Liberon's claim in *Pollution is Colonialism* rests on the notion that colonial logic views nature as a static resource, waiting to be extracted and refined for added value. If people do not recognize the animacy within nature and the webs of nature relations that sustain life, pollution as well as land and life as "collateral damage," in the words of Kimmerer (2013, p. 348), become necessary and inevitable aspects of modernization and economic development.

Kimmerer's description of the greedy Windigo beast in Potawatami folklore personifies the colonial logic of modernization as one with no limit. A Windigo economy is fossil fuel and growth obsessed and does not recognize the logic of interconnectedness nor the abundance already present in natural ecosystems. We have arrived at this painful state of the world through the actions and mindset of those who believe themselves to be superior through logics of white supremacy, patriarchy, and separation from nature. Rather, an economy predicated on the notion of gifts "creates ongoing relationship[s]" and a set of relations between people beyond a mere exchange of commodities (Kimmerer, 2013, p.26). Honoring mutual gift giving as an act of building relations must become a fundamental part of building communities and prefigurative politics to live in accordance with principles of reciprocity and reduced extraction.

The Power of Language

Of the many lessons planted in the pages of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, an important one I take away is about the politics of knowledge and language. Rooted in her experiences as a Potawatami woman, scientist, mother, and teacher, Kimmerer shares stories about human-land relationships and care, and argues that indigenous wisdom needs to be understood alongside the Western model of rational science. She also challenges the reader to interrogate language itself and examine its anthropocentric colonial biases. Kimmerer diagnoses us with a "species loneliness" and guides us towards

multispecies agency and conviviality. In a similar vein, Kate Wright, writing about her multispecies ethnography with a Willow tree, states: "[t]he tools that perpetuate social and environmental injustice are colonial and anthropocentric ways of thinking deeply inscribed into our language, our policies and our institutional structures. In its dynamic, intra-active becoming, the nonhuman world provides us with a subaltern language to think and speak with that is grounded in a logic of connection," (Wright, 2018, p.64). I am struck by Kimmerer and Wright's focus on the potential of attentive language in reorienting us towards our duties of care and moral obligation with the world. Refocusing on the inherent connection between (more than human) beings and land is also a form of epistemic disobedience to the colonial logic of human superiority, rationality, individualism, extraction, and domination which both subtly and overtly pervade language, mindsets, and policies.

Moving Forward: Reciprocity and Mutual Aid

In my engagement with the Decoloniality and Global Political Ecology courses at ISS, I have noticed in myself a (subtle) bias which focuses more at the state and policy level than the individual and community level. Reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* has reminded me of the tangible and small-scaled direct actions we can engage in as people to (make) change ourselves. *Braiding Sweetgrass* reminded me to practice gratitude and reciprocal engagement with others in the here and the now and to recognize the political dimensions of such relations. Though I hadn't understood tending to a garden as political before, Kimmerer illuminates how this is an act of service to the land, oneself, and our relations to the land. Citing philosopher Joanna Macy, Kimmerer (2013, p.340) writes: "As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us." Direct action in the form of communal gardens and mutual aid can also strengthen people's relationship with each other and resist market commodification of public goods. According to a Political Ecology lecture by Roman-Alcalca at ISS in late June, participatory projects such as community gardening can serve to politicize and empower people to care beyond themselves and extend their orientation towards each other in mutual aid, reducing dependency on the state and the market (Roman-Alcalca, 2024).

Conclusion

We have arrived at this painful state of the world, at the precipice of a climate emergency, genocide, and protracted conflict, not due to policy failures but rather as a product of the system that has created our modern world order. Particularly, the colonial ignorance and mindset of entitlement, logics of separation from nature, and racial and gendered hierarchies of difference white supremacy, have gotten us into this mess. I am reminded that we need to think outside of such logics of modernity, coloniality, and hierarchy as we imagine better futures for our communities and the world. Rather than remain paralyzed in a numb spiral of despair and anger, as is comforting to do in a terrifying and unstable world, a prefigurative politics rooted in the recognition and necessity of reciprocity can radically change our realities. As Kimmerer described, we stand at a fork in the road of time with two options moving forward, one of simplicity and natural abundance or a scorched path of the Windigo economy with short-term gains. What path will we choose to go down?

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Shaping Youth Participation through Citizenship Education in Singapore

Ying Hang-Chen. SPD. Singapore

Introduction

Youth participation in Singapore has consistently received significant government attention, with low political apathy regularly featuring as an issue in government discourse (Hong and Lin, 2017). In 2002, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, in his annual National Day Rally Speech, expressed concern that the upcoming decade...

> **would be a 'baptism of fire' that will temper the post-65ers generation (defined as Singapore citizens born after 1965) should their apathetic attitude remain unaddressed** (Wong, 2016, p. 390).

Since then, many youth-targeted measures have been implemented, such as the renaming of an existing ministerial body to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports in 2004, explicitly prioritising youth matters (Ibid.). While opinions differ regarding the effectiveness of these efforts, citizenship education policies remain the primary avenue through which the government shapes and regulates youth participation (Mathews et al., 2021; Thaiyalan, 2020).

This essay discusses how the government has utilised citizenship education policies to frame and shape youth participation in line with its broader agendas. Using governmentality theory, it argues that these policies reflect a strategic orchestration of governance, aiming to instil values, behaviours, and competencies in youth while maintaining a controlled socio-political environment. This results in a widespread depoliticised understanding of participation.

Governing Rationalities in Citizenship Education

Governmentality, as a Foucauldian concept, examines the rationalities and technologies of governance that shape behaviours, dispositions, and actions among the governed (Wells, 2016). In Singapore, citizenship education has historically framed the "ideal" citizen around social stability and cohesion.

Huang (2006) highlights that student activism in the pre-independence era (1950s to 1970s), often triggered by government educational reforms, was perceived as destabilising and counterproductive to economic and social progress. Consequently, student political activities were suppressed in the 1970s, limiting youth participation to non-political domains. Concurrently, rapid industrialisation in the 1970s, coupled with the increasing adoption of science, technology, and English, sparked concerns that Singaporean youth were becoming "westernised" and individualistic, potentially undermining social cohesion (Sim and Chow, 2020).

> **What kind of man and woman does a child grow up to be after 10–12 years of schooling? Is he a worthy citizen, guided by decent moral precepts? ... [The] litmus test of a good education is whether it nurtures citizens who can live, work, contend, and co-operate in a civilised way. Is he loyal and patriotic? Is he, when the need arises, a good soldier, ready to defend his country, and so protect his wife and children, and his fellow citizens? Is he filial, respectful to elders, law-abiding, humane, and responsible?** (Goh, 1979, pp. iv–v).

Such rhetoric framed Asian values like communitarianism, hard work, thrift, and self-sacrifice as beneficial to society. This perspective justified heightening citizenship education to instil "correct" knowledge and values in youth (Sim and Chow, 2020).

Developing Citizenship Attitudes, Skills, and Values

Citizenship education intensified with the introduction of the National Education (NE) curriculum in 1997, now known as Character and Citizenship Education (CCE). This programme focuses on six core values: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Integrity, Care, and Harmony (Ministry of Education, 2014). It also integrates a state-endorsed historical narrative, emphasising Singapore's global position and challenges.

Lee Hsien Loong (1997) argued that understanding Singapore's history fosters commitment to national ideals like meritocracy and multiracialism. Yet, this approach risks framing youth participation as passive appreciation rather than active engagement.

The practical aspect of CCE manifests through the Values in Action (VIA) programme, encouraging students to practise values through compulsory community service. However, participation is framed as distinctly personal and social, aligning with Isin's (2008) conception of the "active citizen" who maintains societal norms, as opposed to the "activist citizen" who seeks to reshape them.

Differentiated Participation in Citizenship Education

Singapore's citizenship curricula reflect meritocratic differentiation. Students are sorted into academic tracks (elite Integrated Programme, mainstream academic, and vocational), each preparing youth for distinct societal roles (Ho, 2004).

> **Only students in the elite track are taught to critique government policies, analyse societal problems, and conduct research into controversial topics, whereas those in the vocational track are taught conservative values like loyalty and compliance (Sim and Chow, 2020, p. 769).**

Such stratification reinforces socio-political hierarchies. Research indicates that vocational-track students are less inclined or confident to effect social change (Ho et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Singapore's citizenship education policies, viewed through the lens of governmentality, demonstrate a strategic effort to shape youth participation. By embedding civic values within the education system and structuring participation opportunities, the government cultivates a disciplined yet active citizenry aligned with its goals of social stability and progress. While these policies develop compliant citizens, they also curtail the scope of political engagement, ensuring youth participation supports rather than challenges the status quo.

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Decolonial Interpretations of Gender Anarchy

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I am writing this essay as a person who was and continues to be gendered incorrectly by those who perceive me because I do not align any gender to myself. I consider myself to be both genderless and genderful. At the same time, I am also racialized white. I was raised within a colonial construct of what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' with the heightened expectation of performing these roles in a conservative religious context. I am both a product and perpetrator of colonial gender norms and imposition, even as I work to remove myself from them.

I start with this to address the questions of my positionality; where am I coming from and where do I want to go? Often in conversations about moving beyond the gender binary, we stop at the acknowledgement, at recognition. But these are not ending points, rather, they are the beginning. Working up from Quijano and Lugones, we can build a vision that is based on plurality rather than arguing for it to even exist. My positionality in this material is as a white, native-English speaking, queer, disabled individual – from here, all aspects of myself can and should be used to propel forward the rights and causes for queer, gender non-conforming, disabled people, including and especially the rights of people under the colonial, neo-colonial, and settler colonial hypocrisy of gender and sexuality expectations and 'norms.'

In her chapter, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Maria Lugones (2007, p. 206) discusses at length the convoluted hypocrisy of white, 'Western,' colonial powers in their treatment of queer and gender nonconforming individuals by examining hegemonic colonial understanding of power (via Quijano) in relation to gender. Her analysis of pervasive patriarchal heterosexual hegemony speaks to the innate racialized violence of the Western gender construct. She says, "Heterosexuality is both compulsory and perverse among white bourgeois men and women since the arrangement does significant violence to the powers and rights of white bourgeois women and serves to reproduce control over production and white bourgeois women are inducted into this reduction through bounded sexual access" (ibid.) She is bringing attention to the violence done not only to people of colour but also to white people – men, women and gender non-

conforming. I make this distinction to highlight the racial differences in gender and sexuality perception and social tolerance for deviation. While cliché, this point expands to prove that liberation for one group is liberation for all.

Put very simply, the further one is removed from the European white cisgendered heterosexual male, the more deviant one was seen to be with varying repercussions. White women were viewed as docile and asexual in filial piety to their husbands and God. In contrast, "Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species - as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild" (Lugones, 2010, p. 744) Through deviation from the white man, white women and a greater extent women of colour, were both desexualized and hypersexualized. While white women were prized for their femininity, women of colour were stripped of their femininity, reduced from 'woman' to 'female' under colonial gender systems of oppression. This reduction furthered the dehumanization of women of colour by likening them closer to animals than humans – the conception of the human, again, being a colonial construct imposed on colonial subjects.

What then, puts us beyond the colonial gender binary? Oyěwùmí (2005, p. 106) describes gender as an inherently hierarchical system. More specifically she says, "Gender is not a property of an individual or a body in and of itself by itself. Even the notion of a gender identity as part of the self rests on a cultural understanding. Gender is a construction of two categories in hierarchical relation to each other, and it is embedded in institutions." Oyěwùmí suggests a rejection of the colonial understanding of gender that links the individual to the body in a cultural mesh of 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits for which 'correct' and 'incorrect' behaviours are assigned (ibid.). Colonial impositions of gender perpetuate binary power relations that privilege (white) men and cisgendered heterosexual people.

If we use Oyěwùmi and Lugones as starting points, we can then see how gender anarchy is the next logical step. Gender anarchy is, as the name suggests, a rejection of hierarchy within gender and a rejection of social constructs and norms regarding gender. While the rejection of gendered norms and constructs is important to move beyond the colonial gender binary, it is still situated within the colonially constructed and upheld gender binary.

Continuing along Oyěwùmí's (2005, p. 102) definition of gender as an embedded hierarchical relation, if the hierarchy is removed, what is left is simply a categorical relation – which is what Oyěwùmí points out as the structure of the Yorùbá society before colonization. Oyěwùmí recounts in detail the linguistic roots of gender-referencing words in Yorùbá. She describes how "the Yorùbá terms obìnrin and okùnrin do express a distinction", but not an inherent difference in stature or power (ibid.). The terms simply refer to anatomical differences between males and females without the socially constructed Western hierarchies associated with colonial gender. Oyěwùmí's analysis of gender in Yorùbá society provides a glimpse of what post-colonial gender might look like by examining pre-colonial gender relations (ibid.).

It would seem that Lugones and Oyěwùmí present a case for gender anarchy in their searches for spaces and meanings beyond the colonial gender binary. This, however, would be too limiting. While they both might advocate for the removal of hierarchy from gender for the sake of women and transgender and gender-nonconforming people, I do not think their arguments should be limited to anarchy. Neither explicitly calls for gender abolition but their works could be used to argue for the abolition of colonial gender constructs and impositions on modern societies. I do not see this happening in praxis anytime soon, but the theory could be derived given more time and space.

The use of gender abolition theory could support the liberation of trans and gender nonconforming people everywhere. Currently, most of the world is constricted by colonial binary gender norms. Our world is full of arbitrary gender markers that have significant legal bearing. Because of the colonial gender binary and its ramifications, trans and gender nonconforming people are put at risk of discrimination from both government and society on a daily basis. Moving towards decolonial gender abolition theory could serve to protect trans and gender nonconforming individuals.

It's a common argument of anti-trans bigots to say that it's a new or passing fad, something created by youth and changing times. This sentiment is not only entirely false, but also erases the rich history of black, brown, and indigenous queer identities and fails to acknowledge the deep entrenchment of colonial gender norms. Maria Lugones's (2008) work on the coloniality of gender has profound implications not only for understanding the colonial context of gender but also for liberating people everywhere from binary limitations and transphobia.

I want to acknowledge that my learning and unlearning towards a decolonial ontology (of gender) have come from black, brown, indigenous and often queer disabled people. There are infinite interpretations of femininity and masculinity in each individual and only when we collectively seek collective liberation can we find collective reprieve. As a society, as societies, we can find liberation from the colonial and archaic constraints of not only binary gender, but gender as a social category. The work of Maria Lugones and Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí and countless others are at the forefront of reimaging a gendered liberation for all current and future generations.

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Minga: Representing The "Exemplary" Protest Through Stereotypes and Moral Boundaries

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'Seven Exemplary Things the Indigenous *Minga* Left Behind' (Forero, 2020). With that title, the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo presented a news article about one massive protest led by the indigenous movement in October of 2020. More than 7.000 rural inhabitants traveled for days from the Southern part of the country to the capital, demanding that the central government uphold the 2016 Peace Agreement and implement other measures to stop the armed violence in their territories. However, these 840 words article only dedicates 10 of them to mention the humanitarian crisis as a reason to protest; in contrast, it focuses on explaining why, despite the stigmatization received from the Government, this was "one of the calmest manifestations in recent times in the country."

I will analyze this piece using the tool of categorization and applying two theoretical frameworks: Stuart Hall's approach to the representation of difference, and Foucault's Regime of Truth. I will argue how, in an attempt to portray an alternative image of the indigenous mobilizations, the article ends up reproducing racist stereotypes about this minority group and stigmatizing the social protest in a way that subtly justifies its repression.

Context and Method

By October 2020, when the *Minga* started the 500 km trip to Bogotá, more than 300 indigenous and other 600 rural leaders had been killed in Colombia since the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Farc guerrillas and the government (BBC Mundo, 2020). Partly motivated by a larger National Strike that was taking place in the main cities to protest against several government policies, they decided to go to the streets and demand the right-wing President Iván Duque to comply with the agreements.

Rapidly after the announcement, stigmatizing messages from the ruling party members became widespread on social media. The accusations were not new: they were violent, carried weapons, were influenced by guerrilla members, and had a plan to carry out a coup (Rendón, 2020; Saavedra, 2020; Padilla, 2020). As always, the *Minga* spokespersons insisted publicly that this is a non-violent ancient

form of expression, therefore they have never had weapons and they are the first to report and expel any member who is found to have a relationship with an armed group (Padilla, 2020). Soon after the protest ended, El Tiempo released the mentioned article about the "exemplary" behavior of the *Minga*, perhaps in an attempt to reinforce the alternative image of a peaceful indigenous movement.

It is important to bear in mind that El Tiempo is the oldest and most widely read national newspaper in Colombia, owned by one of the richest men in the country (La Silla Vacía, 2021). In this sense, journalists in this newsroom have the symbolic power "to represent someone or something in a certain way, with a certain regime of representation" (Hall, 1997, p. 259). In this case, the indigenous peoples, represent a minority (5% of Colombia's population) and their ways of protesting, but also the social protest as a whole.

In the following analysis, I will argue how the article creates two categories: the 'exemplary' and the 'unacceptable', drawing a moral boundary based on Western ideas. To that end, I will conduct a Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA), a method formulated by Harvey Sacks in the 1960s as a tool to study how people, objects and ideas are classified into certain categories with specific characteristics in everyday conversations (Leudar *et al.*, 2004, p. 244).

Analysis: Exemplary/Unacceptable

After giving a brief context of the *Minga*, El Tiempo's article devotes two paragraphs to quote a past interview with a Presidential advisor saying he had military evidence that the indigenous *Minga* was infiltrated by guerrilla dissidents. He states that the demonstrators were planning to conduct "acts of terrorism" with "explosive artifacts" and provoke "clashes with the public forces". In sum, he reduces the protest to a criminal action. The quote ends and the third-person journalist take back the word to say "That, however, did not happen."

Then, the body of the article lists, as in a manual of good manners, the things that did happen during the *Minga* by categorizing them as "exemplary behavior" and as a model for "the other social sectors". In this way, the text creates two contrasting categories: exemplary/unacceptable. The exemplary in the text is portrayed by the *Minga* and includes the adjectives "clean", "organized", "pacific", "impeccable" and "democratic". In contrast, the unacceptable tags, attributed to "other

social sectors, use mostly verbs: “vandalism”, “damage of public goods”, “blockades”, “riots” and “partisan”. By doing this, the article creates a moral division in which it celebrates those who behave “good” and differentiates them from those who act “wrong”. This illustrates one of the representational strategies identified by Hall building from Saussure: “meaning depends on the difference between opposites” (Hall, 1997, p. 235). In this case, the “exemplary behavior” of the *Minga* is news partly because of what it is *not:* vandalic, partisan, etc.

Even though the article is about *Minga* behavior, it uses the same number of times (seven) the adjectives of the exemplary category and the unacceptable category throughout the text. Why, if the protest was “exemplary”, was it necessary to mention all the things that the author finds unacceptable and that did not happen? One answer could be found in the stigmatizing statements from the government members; however, their accusation to the *Minga* was specifically linked to criminality, which is refuted in one of the seven points of the article: “They created mechanisms to avoid infiltrations”. The rest of the answer could lie in assumptions that lead to implicit stereotypes about how “social sectors” exercise their right to protest. Research in Latin America and Colombia particularly has shown that public demonstrations are reported by the media mainly when there is violence involved (Rabinovich, 2011, pp. 21-22), and that the demands of the protesters are rarely a topic of the news (Lalinde Ordóñez, 2019, p. 111). This has created a stereotype that equals protesters to vandals, following Hall’s definition of stereotype, a practice that reduces groups of people to a few essentialist characteristics (Hall, 1997, p. 249).

In El Tiempo's article we can see one of the effects of stereotyping, which Hall names as ‘splitting’ and consists of creating boundaries that divide “the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable” (Hall, 1997, p. 258). These boundaries are represented by the mentioned exemplary/unacceptable categories, but are taken to an extreme in section number 5, titled “They kept their own mobilization”. In one paragraph, the author praises the fact that the *Minga* held their own independent protest without mixing with “students”, “unions” and “other sectors” to avoid getting involved in “vandalism acts”. However, the reality is that the *Minga* did protest along with other sectors with common demands, as several media and academic literature registered (Alvarado, 2020; Paz, 2020; BBC Mundo, 2020). However, the news article was so committed to reinforcing

this *Minga*/Others divide that considered the idea of protesting together almost as a pollution of the indigenous' "exemplary" mobilization.

Analysis: Culture/Nature

While reading the article I also wondered: why was its *news* that the *Minga* was "clean" and "organized"? If the stigmatizing comments never included these adjectives, why was it necessary to mention them? Would El Tiempo highlight the cleanness of a protest performed by white people? The text shows an apparent novelty in the cleanness of the indigenous movement, a surprise that seems to originate in a common stereotype present in Latin American popular culture, which has often represented indigenous characters as *dirty*, *ugly*, *stupid* and with *bad speaking* (Celigueta and Viola, 2021, p. 3).

Stuart Hall's analysis of the "racialized regime of representation" can shed some light on this matter. He explains how, in the case of black populations, a binary Culture/Nature has been installed in the West since Africa's colonization, where Culture is a domain of the white, enacted through rational thinking, 'civilized' behavior and enlightenment; whereas Nature is associated with black people through savagery, instinctual behavior, and rituals (Hall, 1997, p. 243). In the Latin American case, hygiene has also nurtured the idea of Culture installed by white Europeans since colonial times (De Jesus, 2022). In fact, the article at some point equals Culture to cleanness when reporting on how the *Minga* members cleaned the places where they stayed: "The indigenous people gave an example of order and *culture* in the Sports Palace."

Another element of this Culture/Nature imaginary outlined by Hall is the use of civil institutions by the white, western societies, versus the prevalence of rituals in the racialized ones (Hall, 1997, p. 243). This is reflected in the article when the author celebrates how the *Minga* made "use of democratic channels to express their opinions". In that section, El Tiempo refers exclusively to a moment when an indigenous leader spoke about the *Minga* demands in the plenary session of the House of Representatives. In that way, the article equates democracy to formal institutions, and excludes other acts and rituals that took place during the *Minga*. For example, who determines that

the symbolic judgment they performed in Bolívar Square against President Iván Duque for not showing up to their encounter (Semana, 2020) was not *democratic*?

Analysis: A Regime of Truth

Categorization is not only a strategy to create accounts of the past, but usually has the further purpose of justifying future actions (Leudar *et al.*, 2004, p. 224). In El Tiempo's article, this purpose is twofold; first, it implicitly leads to establishing the image of an 'ideal protest', one that is clean, organized, pacific and isolated from others. This would help reinforce what Foucault (in Hall, 1997, p. 49) called a Regime of Truth: the discourses that each society has accepted as truths and that build the ground for norms and people's behavior. Here, the Regime of Truth would be that this is *the* acceptable way to protest and that any other will be rejected.

Therefore, the second underlying purpose of the article's categorization is to justify violent actions against the protests that take place under the "unacceptable" terms. Some authors argue that media is one of the four mechanisms (together with police, judicial and regulatory ones) that exist in Colombia to contain social protest. This occurs, they assert, by reproducing a stereotype that equals protesters to vandals, which creates a "social impunity" when police brutality takes place (Lalinde, 2019, p. 113; Rozo, 2013, p. 39).

Here, at the intersection of the two categories and the state's actions, we see the realization of Foucault's (in Hall, 1997, p. 49) idea that knowledge serves as a tool to control people's actions. On the one hand, there is an "exemplary protest" Regime of Truth; on the other, a stereotyped representation of the "unacceptable" protest, and finally these two meet in the state repression of protest in Colombia: 80 deathly victims of police brutality during protests in 2021 (Indepaz, 2021).

Conclusion

In a probably well-intended attempt to produce an alternative representation of indigenous peoples', El Tiempo's article ends up fueling some of the stereotypes it tries to subvert. A Membership Categorization Analysis allowed me to identify two categories (exemplary and unacceptable) divided by clear moral boundaries. By applying such moral categorization based on a Western ideal of

Culture, the text reproduces some racist essentialisms towards indigenous peoples while stigmatizing certain kinds of protests. In the end, this could have real-life consequences by feeding up a Regime of Truth that justifies state violence against the “unacceptable” forms of protests.

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The Manifestation and Perpetuation of Hegemonic Masculinity in Online Cultures: An Analysis of Reddit in India and Peru

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"No one respects a man who is unable to get a woman", wrote Elliot Rodger in a 137-page manifesto in 2014 which he sent to a mutual he knew from an online body-building forum. He then went on to kill six people and injure fourteen others in California, motivated by a "war against women for rejecting me and depriving me of sex and love" (Winton, Xia and Lin II, 2014). In the years thereafter, more such acts of terror drew increased attention to this specific exhibition of masculinity inspired by incel culture or ideology, which is characterized as online communities of mostly heterosexual men with a perceived inability to pursue romantic and sexual relationships due to factors like social anxiety and lack of conventional attractiveness and financial resources, among others (Maxwell et al., 2020). These online spaces began as ways to ward off the social isolation that men experienced because of that inability, but have since come to become synonymous with hate, misogyny, and violence.

Today, much of this discussion and literature is still limited to countries like the United States and the United Kingdom where this term is more explicitly used. However, over 5 billion people, more than half of whom identify as male, use social media globally (Statista, 2024), making it a space of both concern and relevance for the spread of such ideologies in Global South countries as well. In this essay, we extend the discussion to online cultures in India and Peru to understand the intersection of power, gender, and violence. We do so by specifically analyzing Reddit, a mainstream media platform that is not just accessible for violent and misogynistic discussions, but also more "conducive to user radicalization and migration to more extreme platforms" (Helm *et al*., 2022).

Conceptual Framework: Marginalized Masculinity

In their piece, Coston and Kimmel (2012, p. 98) focus on the concept of masculinity, which is the "site of privilege" for people who identify as male or men. In the United States, the country where they base their research, but also elsewhere, the "ideal male" is expected to meet certain standards in terms of behavior, appearance, and the kind of emotions he shows, as well as demonstrate power over the other genders. This has come to be termed as "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995). Coston and Kimmel argue that while male privilege suggests that all men by virtue of being men reap certain benefits and advantages in society, the intersection of other social categories that deem men less masculine do affect how men experience that privilege. More importantly, they argue that these men then also come to be (or feel, in the case of incel culture) marginalized based on their masculinity – the site of privilege becomes the site of marginalization (Coston and Kimmel, 2012). Their loss of privilege in terms of gender and the questioning of their less-than-ideal masculinity becomes a focal point in how they respond or perform gender in society henceforth. One of the responses to this marginalization, as per the authors, is "militant chauvinism," which can take the form of gender violence as exhibited in online cultures through hate and misogyny (Coston and Kimmel, 2012, p.100).

In this essay, we use Coston and Kimmel's concept of "marginalized masculinity" to explore the interplay of power and socio-cultural dynamics through our main research question: How do men who experience marginalized masculinities in India and Peru respond to this marginalization in online cultures on Reddit?

Method: Thematic Content Analysis

Reddit offers a unique platform for analysing thematic discourse in online spaces due to its features and community dynamics. The upvoting system is relevant because it allows popular opinions to appear first in the thread of comments, reflecting and reinforcing what users think about the topic in discussion, and, in a way, shaping the discourse within a thread. This provides insight into the values and beliefs of users because it highlights which opinions are being amplified. Additionally, Reddit's comment structure facilitates discussions, where users can reply to specific comments which creates sub-conversations within a post. Due to these factors, we chose Reddit to examine how hegemonic masculinity is constructed in digital spaces in both countries.

Following the lead of Maxwell et al. (2020), a thematic analysis method was used wherein posts on Reddit were examined to find existing discussions of incel-like content in India and Peru. Then, one subreddit from India and two subreddits from Peru, as per relevance, were narrowed down for the sampling. An examination of how men were expressing their ideas about masculinity, women, gender norms, and relationships was followed. Based on this, a few posts were extracted to familiarize ourselves with the data followed by a round of coding to generate ideas and notes. These codes were slotted into themes based on repeating patterns that were observed. Following a team discussion and analysis of these patterns, the most relevant themes were chosen. The findings varied slightly for the two countries based on socio-cultural context.

To analyse the online culture in India, a subreddit called "OneXIndia" was chosen, which describes itself as a "safe space for Indian men, about Indian men and to support Indian men" and has 14,000 members. Six top posts with the highest number of comments at the time of analysis were picked. The number of comments analysed was a total of 283. In the end, three major themes emerged: Stereotypes about women, Toxic Masculinity, and Disinformation.

In the case of Peru, a subreddit specifically for Peruvian men could not be found, so two general subreddits dedicated to Peruvian users, "Peru" and "Lima Peru", were examined instead. Within them, posts focused on men discussing women and their perceived unattainability were identified and the 3 top posts with the highest number of comments were selected for analysis. The number of comments analysed was around 230. Three major themes emerged: Stereotypes About Women, Toxic Masculinity, and Rejection of Incel Culture.

Findings from India

Stereotypes About Women

The most prominent theme that emerged was that the subreddit "OneXIndia" was used widely to ask provoking questions which resulted in discussions that were hateful towards women and perpetuated certain cliches about them. For instance, the post with the highest number of comments posed a question: "Indian men, what do [you] like about Indian women?" and asked that they describe their opinion with qualities they prefer. In the replies, most commenters suggested they did

not like women by lightly misusing the language of mental illness as adjectives, like “bipolar,” and “split personality,” and using other terms like “irrational yappers,” “ugly” and “entitled” to describe them. A few comments also discussed whether “foreign” women were better than Indian women.

A few commenters who said they found women “caring” referred specifically to their mothers or sisters and not women in general. This seemed to reflect a common admission that commenters made about not having enough experience interacting with women which meant that their perception was limited to perhaps a handful of personal interactions. This was in line with other comments, for instance, the one below which went into length to describe “green flag women” based on his experience with one female friend:

> “...understands and empathizes with men's issues from a non-feminist neutral perspective, independent and pays for herself... having long hair, processes her emotions on her own and doesn't take it out on you, cooks for you puts efforts to make you feel special like those handmade cards or some handmade gift, wants one partner for life.”

Similarly, in two different posts, one inviting man to speak about the benefits of marriage and the other about not being in a relationship, commenters described women as “promiscuous,” no longer providing the “benefits” of a good wife – specifying that this role included providing sex, “clean house”, “food when you come home, and an overall mother to your future kids” – and as wanting men to work extra hard to provide them with material resources. In one post, a Reddit user said “I prefer Dogs over women. They are loyal, uncomplicated, and offer unconditional love” and commenters responded with several derogatory terms for the female genital organ.

Overall, it could be observed that men preferred women who fit certain gender norms and that most women were seen as deviating from these norms, depriving men of power, and thus not being worthy of marriage or likability.

Toxic Masculinity

In the subreddit, we found several discussions about what men should do to improve their lives. In a post that stood out for its vulnerability, a man described himself as a 32-year-old virgin with “nice

man syndrome" -- already perceiving niceness as an abnormality and thus something to be fixed -- and solicited opinions to "improve himself as a man" after realizing that his female friend did not reciprocate romantic feelings towards him. The advice that he received was mostly about keeping emotions and feelings of attachment in check, picking up "masculine hobbies," chasing "success" instead of "running after women," saying "no" to women and others in his life, and looking for "arranged marriage" (a common Indian concept wherein marriages are fixed not by the couple but by families based on factors like caste, class, and religion).

Similarly, while victimizing themselves for the power they had lost over women because of their not adhering to gender norms, a post invited men to express their opinions about MGTOW or Men Going Their Own Way, a terminology that emerged with an online subculture of anti-feminist men (Bates, 2020). Most commenters agreed that it was the right ideology for "real men", which the post described below:

> "...refers to men committed to self-determination. MGTOW is simply the idea that you don't have to be in a relationship. The idea that you can simply say "no" to society's expectations of how you should live your life. That you can take stock of where you are and where you truly want to be, and work towards your own goals and your own happiness."

Overall, the subreddit did invite discussions on masculinity and vulnerability but the ideas and advice promoted certain toxic and extreme traits as the right ones.

Disinformation

Alongside stereotyping women, commenters also referred constantly to the "evils of feminism", displaying a lack of knowledge about the concept and perpetuating this disinformation while blaming it for the wrongs that men experienced. Additionally, the term "Schrodinger's feminists" appeared several times without much detail. While there was no mention of the term in a review of literature, a Google search shows that it has come to be widely used in social media to mean women with "double standards," one who is "simultaneously a victim and empowered until something happens, then she chooses which state benefits her the most" (Urban Dictionary, 2022). While expressing their rejection of marriage and relationships, many commenters made a note of "laws"

that were biased against them and were misused by women. There was no elaboration of which laws exactly they were referring to and how they affected men except that these were "shitty, gynocentric and misandric laws." For instance, a commentor made the below statement about men being forced to not be in relationships:

> "...unless the Gynocentric laws are made Gender Neutral which they won't and India's fertility rate is already gone pretty down, Government doesn't give a shit about general males and there's Brain Drain."

While India's fertility rates have plummeted, the fact is mentioned out of context alongside other information which is vague and incorrect. Similarly, another commenter wrote about the lack of "freedom of expression" in India, which can be considered factual depending on context. However, he provided examples of the unfair arrest of a man spreading right-wing ideology on Twitter and Nupur Sharma, the editor of a right-wing website – there was a case against her for spreading misinformation, but she was not arrested -- to support his opinion.

Findings from Peru

Stereotypes about women

Comments that reflect and reinforce traditional gender norms and stereotypes on women were abundant in the analysed posts. These comments range from women's materialistic motivations and racial preferences in relationships to critiques of their behavior, like their sexuality. All of them devalue women's attitudes and often reduce their worth to superficial attributes.

A prevalent stereotype in the comments is that women are primarily motivated by wealth in their relationships. For instance, in the following comment from a post discussing the perception that even unattractive women in Peru now consider themselves unattainable, a user says that if a man is wealthy, women will want to be with him regardless of other qualities. "If you are a millionaire, even if you are Peruvian, they will want to be with you."

Additionally, this comment highlights a belief that financial status is valued over other personal characteristics, even those perceived negatively, such as being Peruvian, which the user implies women find undesirable. This comment was in a sub-conversation about Peruvians being

unattractive, which intertwines monetary expectations with racial and ethnic biases. Other comments also mentioned how women only are interested in men with certain status symbols like having a car, being able to invite them on trips and having a master's degree.

In this other comment from the same post which was also highly upvoted, it is also implied that women seek material benefits, but there is an assumption on how they find it unacceptable for women they deem unattractive to make such requests.

> "I have really seen scarcely attractive women, not to be vulgar, who ask for [men with their] own house, a businessman with a car. It is a mental pandemic."

It suggests that these men believe that some women do not have the right to ask for certain attributes, judging based on their physical appearance. Also, it is implied that men might tolerate or accept such expectations if they find the women attractive, perpetuating an idea that a woman's worth is linked to her looks.

This idea of worth is linked with racial stereotypes and the perception of women's preference for foreign white men in the following comment. One user shares a belief that Peruvian women prefer white foreign men and when they achieve it, they devalue Peruvian men, which refers to a perpetuation of racial hierarchies.

> "Before it was the classic brichera who, because she hooked up with a gringo in Cusco, already thinks she's too good for Peruvian men. But now? Wow, even the most average girl goes out with ridiculous standards."

In Peru, "brichera" refers to a local woman who seeks casual or long-term relationships with foreign men, often white ("gringos"), and is used in a derogatory manner. This comment shows a sense of frustration because of these imposed racial hierarchies which translates then into resentment over women and their devaluation.

Women's sexuality is also a space for assessment of her value. For instance, in the following comment that was upvoted, the use of the cat emoji to refer to women's genitals not only objectifies

them, but also suggests that one of the offers that women usually give is sexual. “If the only thing she has to offer is her 'attention' and her, I'm out.”

Additionally, putting ‘attention’ in quotation marks not only shows traditional gender norms that suggest women mainly offer emotional attributes in relationships but also questions its value. After commenting on this, the user at the end of the comment shows rejection of women who do not meet some supposed standards and transactional conduct that men should have in relationships.

Toxic Masculinity

Several comments begin with the devaluation or stereotyping of women, before delving into phrases about how emotional suppression or male dominance is something to look for. When talking about women, assertions on who is a real man and who is not are discussed. Men who validate women who supposedly are materialistic are criticized and labelled as desperate or too emotional.

> “Now even the most unattractive women consider themselves unattainable, and this is a problem caused by so much attention they have received. And who gives them this attention? Purely desperate, horny men who aren't even men but slaves to their emotions, lacking self-love and self-esteem […]. The good thing is that when a real man knows his worth and what he can offer, he doesn't look for women like that.”

It could be observed that men often portrayed emotional expression and desire as something that is a weakness. There seemed to be the notion that a "real man" is defined by emotional detachment or self-awareness, knows his worth and can reject women who do not meet certain standards.

Men in these comments position themselves as the ones who can put value and the ones that have authority on what is an appropriate behavior in romantic partners and therefore reject them, showing male dominance as an attribute that men should have. Men who give attention to women described as "unworthy" are portrayed as less than men, establishing a difference between those who adhere to a specific kind of toxic masculinity and those who do not.

Rejection to Incel Culture

An interesting aspect of the engagement with incel culture in these comments is the reaction to its terminology. Even though the comments fall into a display of hegemonic masculinity and frustration on engaging in relationships with women, whenever someone mentions incel culture lingo, like blue/red pill, the most upvoted comments are the ones rejecting the use of it and the importation of US culture.

> "User 1: Why is Peru (Lima) so BLUE PILLED?"
> "User 2 reply: You project your social ineptitude onto the system, the fact that you believe in that crap reveals your low intellectual, social, and emotional intelligence, you are a pathetic self-fulfilling prophecy, it saddens me to see that the American stupidity of the incels/bluepilled/etc. has been exported to Peru."

What the Findings Tell Us About the Responses to "Marginalized Masculinities"

As argued earlier, Coston and Kimmel (2012), in their work about how male privilege can be diminished in contexts when other forms of marginalization exist, present an interesting framework to discuss how masculinities are formed in these online forums in India and Peru. This is evident in the comments by users of both countries, where women are belittled because men feel they have diminished power or control over them. Whether because of factors such as race or class described in Peru, or because women are adopting more 'feminist' traits and rejecting traditional gender norms in India, men in both contexts express a belief that the dominance and control over women are not the same as they expect. This leads to a display of victimhood and lamenting that they cannot find partners who adhere to their expectations.

In that sense, the intersection of other social categories that deem men less masculine affects how men experience that privilege. One of the responses to this marginalization is what Coston and Kimmel refer to as "militant chauvinism", when men try to emphasize the differences they have with other groups, in this case, women, but those differences are discussed hierarchically and the ways showing this is men asserting male superiority (Coston and Kimmel, 2012, p.100). This can take the form of gender violence, which in online cultures is exhibited through expressions of hate

and misogyny. Therefore, by asserting their dominance in these spaces, men try to reclaim a sense of power and control that they feel is taken away from them.

As shown in the findings, the stereotypes about women are consistently dismissive and are similar in the comments from Indian and Peruvian posts. For instance, in both contexts, women's sexuality is always questioned, discussing how women are promiscuous and belittled through comments on their genitals in both countries. Referring to women's sexuality in this manner allows men to exert their dominance by devaluing women's bodies and showing that the sexual behavior to upholds is the one they consider right. Maxwell *et al*. (2020, pp. 1857-1860), in their analysis of incels on Reddit in the US, found a similar pattern wherein men constantly described women as being hypersexual, self-involved, deceitful, and interested in material resources. Moreover, for both contexts, women are expected to fit traditional gender norms, and when they do not, men devalue their behavior. This frustration leads men to display aggression and dismissiveness to perform their masculinity (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022, p. 618).

Additionally, the display of hegemonic masculinity in India and Peru shares various similarities. The way that gender is constructed in these online spaces is relational, where hegemonic masculinity is constructed as opposed to femininity but also to marginalized masculinities (Connell, 1995; Cheng, 2008). In the sense that comparisons of a ‘real man’ is contrasted with men that do not align with traditional gender norms as well as contrasted with what they expect from women.

For instance, a relevant similarity between Indian and Peruvian expressions is the expectation for men to suppress their emotions. In both countries, display of vulnerability is often seen as a weakness and men always are advised to not follow this way of behaving. This emotional suppression is one of the key components of hegemonic masculinity, which reinforces the idea that 'real men' are stoic and in control (Connell, 1995; Coston and Kimmel, 2012; Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022). The concept of what is a 'real man' is a repeated theme in both countries too and is linked to the rejection of attributes associated with femininity or marginalized masculinities. 'Real men' are those who are assertive, who know their worth and who can assert the ‘true’ value of women and decide which women are worth accordingly, and who have control over their emotions.

This notion of 'real men' reinforces hegemonic masculinity by dividing between those who conform to these ways of behaving and those who do not.

Furthermore, blaming is a recurrent theme in the comments from both Peruvian and Indian contexts. Men frequently attribute their difficulties in having relationships to the actions and behaviors of women or other men (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022; Price, 2023; Capelos *et al*., 2024), whether for women's expectations or the attention they receive from other men. And they direct their frustration and victimization in online spaces with comments that belittle women or that reinforce dynamics of hegemonic masculinity.

Nevertheless, some particularities can be identified in both India and Peru. For instance, in India, there is more discussion around Men Going Their Own Way (MGOTW) and anti-feminism, promoting male independence and rejecting the perceived societal pressures to follow feminist ideas. The comments reflect on a way of victimhood and deprivation to engage in romantic or sexual relationships because of a 'feminism-induced oppression' (Helm *et al*., 2022, p. 30; Price, 2023).

It is worth noting that, in India, much of the recent literature has highlighted the intersection of religion and politics (or Hindu nationalism) in the creation of Hindu masculinity which is fuelled by a perceived threat and the anxiety to maintain sexual hegemony over men of other religions, often through violence (Anand, 2007; De, 2021). In the analysis of OneXIndia, references to caste or religion were not found, but there was repeated use of disinformation to signify that men could not wield enough power in society and that there was a lot to be feared, despised, and wary of. Additionally, studies in the United States have highlighted the rise of alt-right groups, including men's rights activists, in internet subcultures who "package themselves as anti-establishment" and have come to radically manipulate media with anti-feminist misinformation (Marwick and Lewis, 2016). The findings from India seem to fit this analysis in its use of language as well as vague, decontextualized discussions about laws and ideologies expressed with fear and anger, negative emotions that researchers have found to increase "affective polarization" in instances of anti-feminist disinformation online (Malquín-Robles and Gamir-Ríos, 2023). In their analysis of Twitter discourse by men in India, the United States, and Canada, scholars found that right-wing extremists

and incels used similar tropes of "restoring an idealized masculinity" which is closely tied to a kind of nationalism that was also defined by "unimpeded sexual access to women" (Farokhi, Anderson and Jiwani, 2022). The findings about Indian men's notions of the benefits of marriage and the role of an ideal wife fit this analysis.

On the other hand, in Peru, social stratification significantly impacts social interactions, with race playing a divisive role in these dynamics and class being intertwined with race (Quijano, 2000). This stratification can influence the construction of masculinities, where men from marginalized racial and socio-economic backgrounds may feel emasculated (Coston and Kimmel, 2012) and turn to online communities seeking a sense of power. As shown in the findings, men often attribute their own marginalization to categories such as class and race. For example, there is frequent discussion about how Peruvian men are considered less attractive for being non-white and therefore struggle to engage in romantic or sexual relationships. They also talk about how not having a car or property affects their ability to have relationships. Thus, this frustration comes from expectations around wealth and appearance. Fuller (2001) found in her study about the conformation of masculinity in three Peruvian cities that young men seek both solidarity and competition between them, while adults tend to prioritize responsibilities towards the family. This dynamic among young Peruvian men can exacerbate feelings of frustration among those who struggle to meet societal expectations. In that sense, online spaces provide a space where these men can express their frustrations and bond over shared feelings of emasculation, powerlessness, antagonism over women, and construction of hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, one last particularity was the rejection of incel culture in Peru which showed a resistance to importing U.S. cultural ways of talking about gender. Peruvian Reddit users often criticize the use of words associated with incel culture, considering them as foreign ideas that do not align with local realities.

Conclusion

Online spaces like Reddit have come to serve as an important space for the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in society. Even in countries like India and Peru where men

don’t often self-identify as incels, we find that the same language and expressions of misogyny and hate is exhibited in online spaces as in widely studied countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. The complex dynamics of gender and power structures exhibited in online spaces often reflect the socio-cultural factors, norms, hierarchies, and notions of sexuality already inherent in Indian and Peruvian society. Thus, these online discussions should find more space in policies and programs focused on gender and sexuality.

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