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ACRONYM FOR MAJORS

AFES	Agrarian, Food and Environmental Studies
ECD	Economics of Development
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GMD	Governance of Migration and Diversity

INTRODUCTION

Reading the essays in this volume could well prove to be a challenge. A challenge because good essays could lead readers to look at the familiar in a new light. They may involve the readers to change their perspective, or even provoke a change in readers' ideas. It is this quality that solid university essays showcase. Can they make the readers to re-consider? Can they make readers think again? The answer is simply, 'Yes'. The essays in this volume have that quality.

In all the essays in this book, readers will experience that ideas are powerful. They encourage. They motivate. They stimulate. The topics that our students write about range from the everyday to more abstract issues. Some student-authors are frank and open-hearted, whereas others are analytical and strict in applying theory to practice. But all have the curiosity that makes them wonder why the world is as it is.

Chapter 1 focuses on individuals and communities who try to build their lives in challenging circumstances. About a world that pushes for economic growth, about dire situations in war-torn Gaza, or the problem of dying alone. Chapter 2 about activism, food riots or agriculture that tries to adapt to a climate crisis. Chapter 3 has subjects ranging from the violence that women meet while doing their jobs to institutional violence. In chapter 4 we look through a whole different lens, how we (un)knowingly are part of the unverbalised workings of power systems.

What unites the diverse topics of all these different essays is the personality of the student-author. With their organised minds and command of language, they make their words flow across the page. The words invite the readers to join on a mindful journey that takes the readers to the far corners of the world.

The book itself is reader-friendly. The student-editors have grouped the essays in sections with good, indicative titles for each section and with colourful images as separation sheets. This will guide readers in their exploration through the book. Each section is introduced with a short review of the essays included in that section.

Publishing a hefty volume of original student essays, is a collaborative effort. This was not possible without the help of a wonderful and supportive team of student-editors. My gratitude extends to Ana Diaz Flores Rivera, Lauren Facey, Anand Kole, Natalia Romero Leon, Warisa Sukkumnoed and Gabrielle Tanada (in alphabetical order).

I wish you pleasant reading. We hope you will enjoy the diverse texts to your heart's content.

On behalf of the student-editors and the student-authors, I heartily invite you to read as much as you like. I am convinced that you will be pleased to meet our students through their essays. We, as academic staff, are blessed with our students and I am happy that you can meet them now just as well.

With compliments, Peter Bardoel.

Lecturer in Academic Skills and Editor-in-Chief of the series of annual EUR-ISS publications Exercise in World Making. Original Student Essays.

CHAPTER ONE: REIMAGINING SELVES, SOCIETY, AND SUSTENANCE

Atrium

Healing Manifesto: Embodied Degrowth & Animism

By Marisha Mikiashvili. SJP. Georgia

Embodied Degrowth

Extraction. I do not know about you, but sometimes I feel like I am totally alienated from everything and everyone including myself. It is so hard to connect to me, my body, my needs and wants, and my soul. Hard to connect to people, even the ones I am really close to. And it is hard to connect to nature, to species, to trees and rivers. It does feel like I am a robot, just doing things, university, work and some extra things to keep me busy, as if I cannot imagine being alone, being truly present in the moment and especially in my body. I do not even think about the stories behind the vegetables that I am consuming, but I eat food at least 3 times a day. I am a part of the burnout society, and probably you are also. The system that we are living in makes us further away from each other, from slowing down, and persuades us that more is better and more is good. (Degrowth, 2022)

I really want to contribute to creating a better world, like most people who are in this field, probably you are also. Sometimes I just wonder, are we able to change the world when we are so alienated from each other, our environment and also ourselves?

Don’t we need first to slow down, and degrow from within, re-imagine the world that we are living in?

Re-imagine the most ‘basic’ concepts that we do daily. Reimagine what pleasure, joy or rest is. As Adrienne Maree Brown argues in their book of Pleasure Activism, our imagination and reimagination are tools for decolonization and reclaiming our rights. (Brown, 2019)

How Would Embody Degrowth Look Like to Me?

I thought about this quite a lot. And for the sake of my well-being, I have decided to start giving space for it in our thoughts. It starts small. When I close my eyes and try to embody what degrowth means to me, I imagine a small river, full of tenderness. The river starts in my chest, with a smooth flow of cold water that feels refreshing, familiar and safe. It rushes through my body and nurtures me from within. Its presence reminds me to let go, connect, be fluid, empower in between and most importantly, slow down and listen.

It whispers that growth does not mean more, but it means less.

ANIMISM

I said the river whispers to me, because I do believe that they whisper to us when we listen.

Every time I went to the village, my grandmother would make me hug the trees and tell me to thank them for being here and try to connect with them like I am part of it. For a really long time, I thought she was a bit crazy, and I still think that but for different reasons. Now, I hug trees myself, because I want to. I do it less often than I want to because I take it for granted, but when I do it, I experience a sense of belonging and calmness that runs through my body.

To be able to truly decenter yourself from the world, to be able to truly see the living in everything around you, to be able to give respect to beings around you, is what animism is to me. Hallowell has the most beautiful explanation of it. She said animism is a way of living. The way that assumes the world is a community of living people that deserve to be respected (Harvey, 2014).

What would happen if we just embraced that the world is alive? What will happen if we get closer to flowers and rivers or to food we are consuming? What if we embrace this world as an act of remembering each other, and remembering the love that we hold for one another, for our community and for the cosmos?

I Think Animism Cannot Be Without Embodying Degrowth.

Hearing sounds of the earth, to be present enough to feel, not only yourself but also your surroundings, cannot be practiced in the fast capitalist world that always makes us detach from ourselves.

As I let go of growth, and listen to the earth, I feel healing. I discovered that I am not alone. Degrowth and animism are a living manifesto flowing within us.

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ESSAY 2: COMMUNITY ECONOMIES, GAZA AS A CASE STUDY

By Karam Shehada. SJP. Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

In this essay, the "Community Economy" concept will be the starting point to reflect on the experience of Palestinians in forming their own version of "community economy". The first section will briefly define "Community Economy". Then I will dive into Palestine's context to show that to counter the "war economy" (Dana, 2014) of the colonising state of Israel, Palestinians have developed a "resistance economy" (Ibid.) based on their own material, cultural and political resources. The essay will end with a short conclusion.

WHAT IS "COMMUNITY ECONOMY"?

Community economy is "the economic domain in which goods and services are allocated and distributed cooperatively for the sake of a common good" (Van Staveren, 2023, p. 10). Van Staveren shows that most activities in this domain focus on three "economic roles and their combination: Production (fishing commons; worker coops); Consumption (community gardens; green energy associations); Saving, investment, insurance, money (ROSCAs; mutuals; community currencies)" (Ibid.). The Palestinians' resistance economy does not receive subsidies, governmental interference, or even private sector involvement. It is a strategy initiated by diverse communities so that it serves to counter the continuous war economy imposed by the colonising occupier. I argue that there is a literature gap regarding conceptualising the "resistance economy" as "community economy". Most of the literature, whether suggested in the class (e.g. Miller, 2013; Ostrom, 2014; Van Staveren, 2020) or in other academic sources (e.g. Williams et al., 2012; Bergeron and Healy, 2013; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013), have not theorised the community initiatives against colonisers as one form of a community economy. Therefore, I will use Van Staveren's (2023, p. 10) definition of the "community economy" as a starting point to depict the Palestinian "resistance economy."

COMMUNITY ECONOMY: GAZA AS A CASE STUDY

After falling under occupation in 1967, Gaza, as a part of Palestine, went through expulsion, homelessness, and oppression resulting in destructing its economic structures. The

emergence of the community economy in Gaza can be observed significantly since the first Intifada (1987), which was characterised by the emergence of numerous community initiatives aimed at self-sufficiency and confronting Israeli oppression and hegemony (Khalidi and Taghdisi-Rad, 2009, pp. 5-6). Agricultural and craft cooperatives were established to reduce dependence on the Israeli economy, which flooded the Palestinian market with its production (Roy, 1987, p. 79). In fact, the Palestinians were creative in developing home agriculture with the simplest available tools, challenging Israeli hegemony and resisting the economic colonialism. However, in the 1990s, by signing Oslo Accords, successive Palestinian governments began to restructure the Palestinian economy to be in-line with the capitalist frameworks imposed by international powers and the Paris Economic Protocol, adversely affecting the Palestinian economy (Qarsh, 2016). Here, the Palestinian economy relied almost entirely on foreign aid and support from donor countries, which created new gaps between social classes (Ibid.). This forced various communities to confront these pressures by creating initiatives to survive and resist the occupation, benefiting from the experience of the first Intifada. Lenin says that colonialism is the highest stage of capitalism (1917), therefore the role of the community economy should be understood as a tool of resistance to the highest stage of capitalism. A capitalist system seeks to exploit peoples' resources to achieve its interests. Roy (2016) argues that in the case of Israel, as a colonising power supported by international capitalism, it besieges the Palestinian economy and prevents its development. Thus, the Palestinian economy is totally linked to the Israeli, which totally controls Palestinian ports and crossings, imposes unfair restrictions on the movement of exports and imports, and forces using its own currency on Palestinians. The community economy was almost the only means to confront colonial capitalism. Different initiatives to develop urban agriculture emerged, such as "green roofs" (Shahin, 2010), an initiative of planting on houses' rooftops to provide food locally as well as encourage self-sufficiency and self-employment of household members, and the "Plant your home… produce your food… and protect your family" initiative (Abu Aoun, 2020, p. 1), clearly challenging the Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian economy.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIES UNDER GENOCIDE

After 15 months of genocide practiced by Israel, the Palestinian economy in Gaza faces unprecedented challenges. The indescribable infrastructure destruction, the complete crossings closure, and the supplies interruption have made it impossible for Palestinians to meet even their

minimum basic needs (Al-Helou, 2024). Accordingly, it was necessary to look for creative solutions to confront this Israeli starvation policy and its deliberate agricultural lands destruction. Initiatives seeking to provide food, shelter, and clothing increased, with women playing a prominent role in producing bread and clothes in homes and tents to distribute to needy families (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Meanwhile, "Green Oases" initiatives emerged to cultivate empty spaces in destroyed homes, shelter schools, and internally displaced people (IDP) camps with agricultural crops, allowing residents to rely on themselves to produce their own food to satisfy their hunger, without relying on relief aid that the occupation obstructs (Fayez, 2024, p. 1).

As Fayez (2024) observes, even in the northern Gaza Strip where the occupation has turned green agricultural lands into a barren desert, community initiatives emerged under the title "We produce our own food with our own hands" (Ibid., p. 2), cultivating again the destroyed land by farmers who refused to obey the occupation's orders to leave it. They remained despite the high risk. Meanwhile, other initiatives emerged to overcome the famine that the Gaza Strip residents are facing, by planting fast-growing crops such as zucchini, Roka, and mallow, under the title: "Plant on the rubble" (Abdel Azim, 2024).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I used the "community economy" definition introduced by Staveren (2023) to reflect on various forms of resistance economy initiated in Palestine. These initiatives led by ordinary individuals and experienced farmers can develop into a great model for a sustainable resistance economy, disengaging from the dominant Israeli capitalist economy, thus rebuilding the Palestinian economy and strengthening its resilience and independence. The community economy in the unique Gaza experience during genocide was not just a means of survival, but a blatant declaration of rejection of colonial hegemony, and a serious attempt to build a better future.

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ESSAY 3: (MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF LISBON'S URBAN MARGINALISED SPACES – RAP AS ARTIVISM: COUNTER NARRATIVES IN THE MARGINS

By Gustavo Santos. SJP. Portugal.

INTRODUCTION

Urban peripheries are both physical and imaginary spaces, constructed and sustained by racist, colonial and discriminatory political discourses and policies (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019). This essay intends to analyse the representations of the everyday experiences of the peripheries of Lisbon, providing a comparison between representations that emerge from people that inhabit these margins, mostly an amalgam of lower-class Portuguese people and immigrants from African Portuguese speaking countries (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019; Loria, 2016), and mainstream media representations of these spaces. In order to construct a relevant analysis, the essay compares the representation of Lisbon's outskirts, and those who inhabit them, through hip-hop song 'Subúrbios', by Valete, in which the artist exposes the political and socio-economic problems faced by these populations, and contrast it with dominant narratives in relation to these areas, dissecting a news article, from online media source 'Euro News', concerning violence and popular uprisings in these neighborhoods, in the aftermath of the homicide of another immigrant by a police officer.

The essay draws from Hall's (1997) theories of representation, grounded on an understanding of RAP music as an active tool of resistance, a site of contestation and a platform for social change (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019; Vidal, 2023). It employs textual analysis tools and argues that misleading and false narratives are still being employed in regard to these spaces by mainstream media platforms, which can be perceived as a continuation of racist and discriminatory discourses that have historically been used to categorise Portuguese 'bairros'. Additionally, it exposes that efforts to create counter narratives exist, which increasingly pressures towards a shift of existing power dynamics in the country.

PORTUGAL'S 'BAIRROS SOCIAIS'

Portugal's position as a semi-peripherical country (Vidal, 2023) and almost fifty years of dictatorship (1928-1974) resulted in a country that was mainly rural and underdeveloped. One of the consequences of the revolution in Portugal was the independence of its former colonies in Africa. As a result, the 70's and the 80's were a period characterised by a shift in the migratory flows of the country, moving from emigration to immigration patterns (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019). Portugal's urbanization process occurred later and more rapidly, when compared to other European countries, growing exponentially after the country's integration in the European Economic Community in 1986. This process was heavily influenced by new migratory flows from Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, mostly directed at urban spaces (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019), in addition to the rural exodus, direct consequence of the industrialization and construction projects started by the revolutionary forces (Raposo and Varela, 2016).

Raposo and Varela (2016) argue that political inability in the country to deal with housing crises led to the emergence of slums in Lisbon[1], which was later poorly addressed with social reallocation projects that pushed these populations to the outskirts of the city. Comparisons can be drawn from Gottdiener and Hutchison (2019) studies on urban sociology in the US, and ghettoization of immigrant communities, and the project of *bairros sociais* in the peripheries of Lisbon. The authors (2019) argue that segregation into 'ghetto' areas has led to the emergence of marginalised, racialised and poor urban spaces, historically repressed. In Portugal, this reallocation project led to the creation of what Raposo and Varela (2016) expose as a continuum of social neighborhoods in the outskirts of Lisbon, shaped by precariousness, discrimination and segregation.

[1] Bairros de lata

RAP AND THE PERIPHERY

Arts and music have historically been at the centre of the production of counter hegemonic discourses. Scholars have devoted attention to researching the capacity of music as an active tool for social change, arguing for its potential as a powerful form of resistance, that moves beyond silent disagreement towards the creation and maintenance of an active space of social critique (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019; Raposo, 2015; Vidal, 2023).

The emergence of rap music in Portugal has been closely connected with urban peripheries and its marginalised populations, particularly black communities. Scholars understand Portuguese rap as a heritage of the discrimination and marginalization faced by black communities, an attempt to counter social and institutional invisibility, and through the aspirations of these populations to obtain larger economic and political participation, finding in rap music the privileged tool to expose their stories (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019; Vidal, 2023). The ideological component of the periphery is present in the thematics of Portuguese hip-hop movement, which approaches topics such as poverty, drugs violence and lack of access to basic social welfare (Vidal, 2023). Rap music becomes, then, an illustrative example to analyse counter hegemonic cultural production in the margins.

The imaginary of the 'hood' is a fundamental component to hip-hop internationally. Portuguese hip-hop artistic roots deeply connect with its American predecessor, hence the centrality given by Portuguese rap artists to a sense belonging to the 'bairro', as it is understood by them as a double-edged sword, both a symbol of the society that actively discriminates them and a central ideological foundation of their collective identity (Guerra, 2020). Artists and scholars have criticised the inherent violence in the representations of the 'bairros', in both political discourses and media outlets in the country, that result in the normalization of discriminatory policies and employment of state institutions, the police, with repressive intents against its populations (Guerra and Sitoe, 2019; Raposo and Varela, 2016; Vidal, 2023). Rap music, more than being another art form, actively challenges these prejudicial narratives and emerges as a form of artivism.

(MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BAIRRO

Hall (1997) argues about the importance of stereotyping, through the construction of the 'Other', as a signifying practice used by the elites to influence the masses into some constructed 'truth', while actively normalizing situations of discrimination and exclusion. This section of the essay will analyse how social media (re)produces negative stereotypes in relation to urban peripheries, exposing the real negative impacts it has on the everyday lives of their populations, and juxtapose it with positive representations in order to understand the importance that representations hold.

Following the murder of Odair Moniz on the 21st of October 2024, a cape Verdean citizen, by a police officer in Lisbon, multiple news outlets rushed to report on the incident and resulting popular outrage sparked by it. The article dated 23rd of October 2024, by 'Euro News' (Rodrigues and Carvalho, 2024), is particularly concerning, for its one-sided accounts on the violence that erupted in the following days. The article is framed through the lens of violence, associating the peripheries with criminality and insurgency, actively categorizing (Leudar et al., 2004) its population as savage, both sustaining the narrative of the uncivilised 'Other' and justifying the multiple episodes of police brutality the populations have endured. Words such as 'tumultos', 'violência' and 'desordem' (riots, violence and disorder) are reoccurring throughout the article and naturalise negative discourses associated with these areas. Contrarily, the frame used by artist Valete, in his song 'Subúrbios', to represent the populations of the 'bairro' discloses a different truth, one of the everlasting discriminations faced by the populations. The rapper uses words such as 'povo escravizado' and 'pretos demais' (enslaved people, poor souls) (Filipa, no date) to denounce labour precariousness and marginalization faced by poorer black communities reproduced even by richer black communities in the city.

The article (Rodrigues and Carvalho, 2024) offers a privileged insight into the narrative employed by the political forces in the country, through the voices of the Portuguese president and a minister. Considering his position as the highest representative of the State, the words of Rebelo de Sousa[2] need to be understood within a larger body of discursive practices reproduced

[2] President of Portugal

by State institutions. The emphasis given in the president's note to security and order as democratic values and the importance of the rule of Law, enforced by security forces, mirrors traditional State narratives of impartiality and monopoly of the use of violence. The president undermines the populations claims for justice, repudiating violent actions by the population, arguing that the country is and should remain peaceful, while actively normalizing the repressive methods used by the police as a response to the protests. Nonetheless, as Raposo and Varela (2016) argue, violence and racism directed by the State at racialised communities are sustained by these same institutions and a particular legal status that naturalises repression and differentiation, which are integral for social control of the populations.

Hall (1997), inspired by Foucault's (1980) argument of knowledge as power, introduces the concept of regimes of truth, and explains how discursive practices, by constructing some facts as absolute truths, influencing real policies. This uncritical look of the State towards its institutions enables them to continue operationalizing discriminatory practices, with real life consequences for the populations, as the death of Odair, and many others, reflect. Communities have repeatedly exposed episodes of police brutality and repression. Valete denounces it in the song 'Subúrbios', with multiple mentions to the racist and oppressive character of the police. The rapper utilises a word play to affirm that security forces are responsible for insecurity in the neighborhoods ('forças de segurança/Aqui só trazem insegurança') (Filpa, no date). The musician further claims that the institution is constituted by racist people with his lyric 'Vêem numa de roubar pretos com armas e cacetetes/Há mais skinheads na PSP que no PNR' ('They come to steal black people with guns and nightsticks/There are more skinheads in the police than in PNR[3]') (Filipa, no date), clearly referring to the far-right branch of the skinhead movement, which is historically responsible for multiple violent attacks directed at minorities, drawing comparisons with the behavior of police forces in Portuguese 'bairros'.

The claims of the populations, and their reflection on the artistic production that emerges from the margins, seem to hold truth in them. The day after the 'Euro News' article was published, there was an article published by 'Expresso' (Pereira, 2024) exposing the lack of veracity in the

[3] Portuguese far-right party

police report about the death of Odair. The article claims that the original report stated that Odair was driving a stolen car, which originated his stopping by the police and that the shots were fired by the police officer as a response to Odair threatening the police officer with a knife (Pereira, 2024). The news piece (Pereira, 2024) later exposes that the car was not stolen and that, during interrogation, the officers denied that Odair used a knife against them. So, the question remains, why was Odair shot dead by the police officer?

As mentioned previously, the narratives employed by political forces and media outlets have been instrumental to the continuation of discrimination in the country. However, the work of multiple artists, activists and associations is increasingly reshaping the population's perceptions about the marginalised neighborhoods, which are home to some of the finest cultural production in the country. The peaceful protest demanding for justice in the following days of Odair's death gathered thousands of people, from diverse backgrounds, to show support to his family and demand accountability and structural changes in police forces (Gustavo and Almeida, 2024). This proves that there is an increased potential for counter narratives to crave space in the mainstream discourses and actively challenge the discriminatory tendency of Portuguese State institutions and policies.

CONCLUSION

Violence against marginalised communities is transversal in both its representational and physical aspects. The connection between the discriminatory discourses employed by political and social elites in the country, in relation to peripherical areas of Lisbon, has historically been instrumentalised for economic and political gains of a small group of people, at the expense of the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people in the country. Efforts to fight against the regimes of truth implemented by political forces have arisen from grassroots activism, with a key role being played by artistic production emerging from the peripheries, helping deconstructing prejudices and false preconceptions in relation to these areas. Nevertheless, the struggle against the discriminatory state continues, as the recent rise of the far-right in Portugal has opened up new spaces for racist discourses to proliferate in the country.

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ESSAY 4: RISK AND CLIMATE CHANGE: SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY AS PROBLEMATIQUE

By Hadi Ameer. GDP. Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION: RISK AND A JANUS-FACED MODERNITY

Ulrich Beck's seminal work on risk consciousness and its incomprehensible nature, *World Risk Society*, was published when discussions regarding environmental problems were assuming global importance. Colloquially, the term *climate change* was starting to replace *global warming*, signalling the creation of sensibility that multiple aspects of natural environment were changing, not just temperature. Since then, much has been discovered and written on rising sea levels, increasing planetary temperature, and declining biodiversity. While there has been a significant influx in social science approaches (historical, sociological and anthropological) to climate change, research on climate change has primarily been conducted using the vocabulary of the natural sciences. Beck problematizes this, illustrating the irony central to the world, created by a scientific-technical society (Beck, 1992, p. 329). This irony is central to the conception of risk society; a world haunted by a constant threat of the unknown and incomprehensible. This includes dangers like nuclear radioactivity and long-term accumulation of toxins in soils and later human bodies. These dangers are significant and immense in relation to humanity's scientific toolkit, which fails to account for them. Infact, it is science's self-professed mastery over the natural world which makes self-reflection and the identification of the discipline's own limits much harder, This is the irony of Beck's "modern" paradigm, problematized in relation to science (Beck, 2020). He unravels the "technocratic" and "naturalistic" tendency of research, its futile scientific attempts to give meaning or shape to variably complex realities, along with the erroneous cause-effect mechanisms utilized in scientific research (Beck, 2015). Beck's contribution has value, given risk society's parallels with a world increasingly characterized by climatic uncertainty. In such uncertainty, precarity becomes the new normal, produced by elements that both transgress and confound, but ultimately encompass human society. This essay, then, constitutes a study of Beck's risk society in relation to climate change. But while it often agrees with how Beck characterizes science's limitations in dealing with risk, it is more directly concerned with the epistemological and temporal implications of Beck's theorization and its limitations in a world of climate crisis

THE NOT-YET OF CRISIS

"The past loses the power to determine the present"

(Beck, 1992, p. 34)

World Risk Society argues for a temporal reorientation that can help account for many transformations necessitated by risk. In other words, risk also concerns the constitutive linkages between past, present and future. More specifically, this denotes the role of past and future in the discursive production of the present. Beck clearly demonstrates his affinity for the projected variable, which seeks to connect fictive but possible scenarios to decisions of the present. The enormity of the threat overwhelms other considerations, becoming a collective threat that humanity must face. The future, in all its incalculability and unfamiliarity, looms forebodingly over the present, while the past recedes to a non-factor in the logic of decision making. This, then, is a call for a social consciousness oriented towards the future. This analytic, manifests in how risk replaces a historically produced class, as the defining feature of contemporary society. This idea of risk centres on an event that has not yet happened but is on the horizon of possibility and for Beck, this "not-yet event" carries potential for social mobilization (Beck, 1992). For this essay, the idea of the not-yet and a limited temporal sensibility of planetary crisis becomes a diverging point. While the temporal category of the not-yet may prove useful, it is also susceptible to complacency and indifference, both of which have already been observed aplenty in responses to climate crisis. This is because we can already observe the flawed sensibility cultivated by scientific methods. Take the example of the following statement released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which states that "global temperature is likely to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial level temporarily in next 5 years" (WMO, 2023). Similarly, the United States' NOAA (National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration) states that "global mean sea level is likely to rise at least one foot (0.3 meters) above 2000 levels" (NOAA, 2024) by 2100. Such empirical predictions, similar to Beck's invocation of the not-yet, temporally misrepresent the crisis. Here, the projected variable materializes through causality, invoking a uniformity of occurrence and consequences. Three decades after *World Risk Society*, it is apparent that climate change does not necessarily materialize as eschaton, but on varying spatiotemporal scales and the severity of its consequences is contingent on a plethora of factors. Here, Beck can be credited for highlighting that the scientific

representation of crises is starkly different from its lived, human experience, but overall his explanation falls short.

While notions of empirical accuracy can be endlessly critiqued (Beck already does so), it is their social and discursive ramifications that necessitate greater concern here. To state otherwise, how does the scientific representation of climate change exacerbate indifference or even skepticism to it? It can be agreed that confronting climate change and assimilating information regarding its gravity can prove challenging. Evidence of the problem exists, but often with limited certitude and sometimes without attributability. And at the same time, a general sense of belief in science and its ability to solve problems undergirds everyday activity (often through technology). In this case, the evidence from one's immediate (material) overwhelms the abstraction regarding a precarious future and reduces the urgency of action and the awareness accompanying it. Here, the not-yet type aggravates an already latent inaction. Further compounding is the observation that human knowledge and methods themselves are confounded by the nature of the problem. Scientific problem-solving may require some (or all) of the following: chain(s) of causality, causal relationships between two or more actors, and a fixed time-period. In a world of climate uncertainty, none of these are definitively deducible. Science then, despite Beck's attempts to redeem its rationalist essence, fails to accurately represent a variably changing environment.

Despite his well-articulated disdain for modern scientific method, he succumbs here to the very trap he sets for science. By invoking the idea of the not-yet and scientific rationality (which we will discuss later), Beck adds to the misimpression that there is an identifiable starting point for human-induced climate change, along with the further erroneousness that given the existence of this point, it can be accurately discerned. This highlights that for all his criticisms of science, Beck's risk society is still straitjacketed by a modern temporality which designates present and future together, while relegating the past to non-factor.

PROBLEMATIZING THE SCIENTIZED CONSCIOUSNESS

> *"…the risks of civilization today typically escape perception and are localized in the sphere of physical and chemical formulas"*
>
> (Beck, 1992, p. 21).

This text has priorly elaborated on Beck's conviction regarding the futility of natural sciences and their practice. But it is surprising to observe that despite his scathing criticism, Beck still leaves ample room for science and rationality. The claim to risk society's uniqueness is grounded in the imperceptible nature of risks, but the conviction regarding the ability to overcome such crises of perception is still invariably rooted in science. Here perhaps, Beck fails to see how science's own shortcomings have actively produced risk society. Returning to the rationality imperative, however, Beck proposes an "opening up of the political" (Curran, 2013), proposing an awareness movement that can convince mass media to pay greater attention to environmental risks. Based on this desired trajectory of events, a quantitative increase in media representation should produce a society more attuned to modern risks. This time lag is introduced to separate earlier and latter stages of risk society, which are differentiated by more manifest risks and more awareness (Mythen, 2021). Several contradictions arise here. To state the above (such as in terms of media reporting) is to imply a causal relationship between information and awareness. While this is not too far-fetched, it is also essential to understand that the nature of the problem is as Beck himself states: incomprehensible and unprecedented. Given this immensity of scale, it seems counterproductive to fall back on scientific rationality, especially given the feeble argument that even in an ideal risk society, uncertainty remains the defining characteristic. Additionally, the focus on media awareness diverts attention from the more central problematique (which Beck does refer to generally but conveniently sidesteps here), which is regarding the source and nature of knowledge production utilized by the media; once again science.

Beck successfully provides grounds for a theorization of predicament that can relatively distance itself from anthropocentrism and see agentive capacities in the so-to-speak non-human world, but in the incessant focus on human causes of risk and modernization, he ultimately prisons his own framework within an objective understanding of risk and perception contingent solely on rationality. He challenges the human/non-human binary (which is ultimately rooted in scientific and rationalist thought), but only to the extent that it exceeds human sensibilities and can eventually unrelentingly and catastrophically spill over into human society. The limited understanding of nature vis-à-vis the human arises in terms of how he only sees it as a thing to be problematized, and not as an inextricable, already interwoven aspect of human life (Ghosh, 2017). Such an approach, therefore, cannot see the environment as constantly permeating the "human" world and as historical agent, serving to remind us of the deeply rooted tendencies to binarize in

modern thought. The day of climate reckoning, is already denoted as not-yet, placing further constraints on everyday perception. Beck's analysis thus contains unseemly residues of the modernity project, which sought to conceptualize the natural environment as an object of mastery and as a solution-requiring problem. The reliance on scientific method proceeds further. Science contains embedded within it an irrationality, which for Beck can be overcome only through the social application of rational thinking (Curran, 2013). For Beck, causality, even in risk's invisible facts, is providable only through science.

It is essential to note here that Beck's critique of modern science stems not from its functional inadequateness, but from what he believes is its erroneous praxis. Beck can be praised for understanding the inherent finitude of humanity before the natural world, but the fact that he still fails to see an outside to the rational, modern sensibility actually underscores its prevailing and pervasive influence. This 'scientized consciousness', which Beck assumes in his theorization, becomes a stand-in for human perception, culminating in an over-deterministic view of risk, while culture, habits, and other factors can all be seen to hold significance (Mythen, 2021). Also in providing this line of reasoning, Beck fails to consider the ontological consideration that the very historical making of risk society did not occur in a political-discursive vacuum, but is closely linked to a dominant scientific culture and the persisting commonsensical belief in its problem-solving abilities. To summarize this contradiction, the following question can be posed: **if scientific society is responsible for the risk crisis, how will it, given its perpetuated causal and perceptually limited logics, reorganize society around the imperative of catastrophe?**

CONCLUSION

This essay critically examines the social order envisioned by Beck and the inadequacies of this framework in addressing a contemporary risk: the climate crisis. In doing so, it problematizes the idea of risk as a not-yet event, which for Beck has emancipatory potential. Also critiqued is Beck's own "objective" understanding of perception and social logics, his own scientific subjectivity and the contradictions it produces. This essay, then, seeks to situate risk society as one of the earlier attempts at providing a social model for how climate change could be understood, but a problematic one at that. More generally, it elaborates that critiques of scientific method

should take into account not just the scientific discipline, but also the larger, more everyday logics and patterns of thought that science produces and perpetuates. Theorization, as seen in Beck's sociological investigation, is also not free from the shackles of causality, Here perhaps, a provincialization of knowledge, similar to what Chakrabarty (1992) details, could prove useful, putting rationality in its place as one among many, and not **the** determinant of perception. This provincialization, then, would also entail a temporal reorientation that opens up the present to the past and politicizes modernity's towards present and future (Boudia and Jas, 2007). It problematizes the futuristic orientation of the present, given how it converts the past into an object of knowledge and thus disciplines it. An alternate vision, then, would be to see the past as alive and variably interacting with the present, From hereon, it becomes possible to de-objectify the present, dynamizing its representation as a coalescence of many historical "nows", where "now" is defined as "an indefinite boundary state of a process that is happening," (Patomäki, 2011, p. 2011). Offering relief from Beck's self-inflicted scientific-rational restrictions on social praxis, this essay thus advocates a moves away from a necessarily scientific-rational consciousness as bedrock for climate risk society, instead turning to Walter Benjamin's invocation that "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history' (Benjamin, 2003, p. 390), as a means of rendering the historical productive in responding to crises that are unprecedented and unfathomable.

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ESSAY 5: SOILED INTENTIONS: CARBON FARMING AND THE UNEQUAL GROUNDS OF THE EU'S CRCF

By Ethan Laney. AFES. USA.

What if the very companies responsible for decades of soil degradation, declining biodiversity, and deforestation repositioned themselves as the new champions of soil regeneration? This paradox highlights the central contradiction of the EU's new Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) and its attempt to integrate soil carbon sequestration (SCS) into one of the primary drivers of its net-zero initiative. As the second largest reservoir of carbon, the earth's managed soils and grasslands are framed as the new frontier for emissions reductions and warming reversal (Real Zero, 2022**).**

While there is evidence to suggest that the agricultural sector holds significant potential to sequester carbon and GHGs, this paper critically examines the mechanisms of carbon credit exchanges, carbon sequestration methods, agribusiness greenwashing, and the CRCF policy rollout. In drawing from new institutional economics (NIE), a nuanced case for SCS emerges to design institutions which address existing market failures and climate externalities. The remainder of the analysis will critique NIE from an agrarian political economy approach and examine the underlying power dynamics of SCS schemes as a manipulation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and effective climate action. This analysis evaluates the institutional effectiveness of SCS methods and whether the CRCF is a viable tool for the EU's broader climate strategy.

THE CRCF AND CAP-AND-TRADE SYSTEMS

In 2005, the EU ETS was launched as the world's first and still largest carbon market operating on a "cap-and-trade" principle (ICAPP). A **cap** refers to the maximum number of emissions a company or sector is permitted to release annually. Companies that emit less than their allocated limit—in which one allowance typically equals one ton of CO_2—can sell their surplus emission allowances (EUAs) to firms that exceed their cap, helping those firms avoid regulatory fines in a process called offsetting. Currently, the ETS is in its fourth phase, operating in the power, industrial, aviation, and most recently maritime sectors. The European Parliament has gradually

phased in new sectors to adapt to the monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) complexities of new domains. While the current ETS system covers 40% of total EU GHG emissions, most agriculture, land-use, and forestry emissions are not currently included (European Commission, 2025).

Outside of the ETS, voluntary carbon markets (VCMs), allow companies, individuals, or governments to buy carbon credits to voluntarily offset their carbon footprint. Corporations aiming for net-zero or carbon-neutral status can buy credits from suppliers or projects that remove or offset emissions including renewables, technology-based carbon capture, and nature-based restoration. Credits are certified through disaggregated and often lose international standards like Verra, Plan Vivo, and Puro. Earth (McDonald et al., 2021).

In an attempt to formalize voluntary markets and MRV systems, the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF), approved by the European Parliament in April 2024, provides a legislative framework to govern the generation of carbon removal and emission reduction certificates (Scherger, 2024). While it is meant to act as a complement to emissions reductions across all sectors of EU Climate Law, the CRCF does not explicitly ban offsetting. It lays a framework for sector and use-specific guidelines of credit acquisition and MRV. For instance, the framework acknowledges that sequestration of carbon in soils and forests due to practices like tree planting are at risk of carbon release in the short-term. Thus, certificates will need to provide guidelines for ensuring expired certificates for credits are cancelled.

While CRCF credits are currently intended for use on voluntary carbon markets, the framework is a steppingstone for later integration as an EU Carbon Market for Agriculture (agETA) (Scherger, 2024). In this scenario, agriculture entities could use CRCF credits for compliance or offsetting within the marketplace. With the global carbon offset market expected to quadruple in value to 1.8 trillion by 2030, civil society groups are expecting intense corporate lobbying effort to integrate CRCF into the ETA (Arc, 2024). An influx of corporate capital into sequestration projects is bound to test the strength and veracity of the EU's institutions. The EU is at a critical juncture where it must decide whether it's appropriate for the agriculture sector to incorporate a credit market or SCS efforts into its emission reduction strategy.

NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS AND MARKET-BASED SOLUTIONS

The New Institutional Economics (NIE) school provides a clear rationale for why carbon credits system and the CRCF can be an effective antidote for market mechanisms gone awry. Building on neo-classical economics, NIE integrates the role of formal and informal institutions in influencing economic behaviors and outcomes (Harriss et al., 1995).

Quick Fixes for Market Failures

NIE posits that institutions arise to address market failures–in this case GHG emissions as an uncontrolled externality of agricultural production. Increasing frequency of drought, reduced agricultural productivity, and market volatility, all add a "climate tax" on production costs and prices for nearly all agricultural goods. A study by *Nature Communications* estimating the externalities of emissions on food costs, found that GHG emissions are responsible for an additional €2.41/kg on animal-based products amounting to a 71% surcharge on the producer price level (Pieper et al., 2020).

According to some models, global farmland has the potential to sequester up to 3.4 gigatons of carbon per year, nearly 1/3 of annual emissions from the fossil fuel and cement sectors (Keenor et al., 2021). OECD estimates also indicate that soil carbon sinks could offset annual GHG emissions like methane and nitrous oxide–gasses with exponentially more warming potential than carbon dioxide–by 4% per annum over the next century (OECD, 2022). In a global economic system upheld by sustained economic growth, SCS presents governments and corporations with the potential to reduce externalities while also creating new market incentives for agricultural producers and investors. With the average market price of sequestered carbon sitting around $20/ton, multinational corporations (MNCs) like Microsoft and IBM have rapidly entered voluntary carbon markets across the world, both buying credits and investing in SCS projects (Grain, 2022).

Assessment criterion	Managing peatlands	Agroforestry	Maintain and enhance SOC on mineral soils	Livestock and manure management	Nutrient management on croplands and grasslands
Carbon farming actions	Peatland rewetting / maintenance / management	Creation, restoration, and management of woody features in the landscape	Cropland and grassland management	Technologies to reduce enteric methane, manure management, increased herd and feed efficiency	Improved nutrient planning, timing and application of fertilisers; reduction in fertilisers
Total EU mitigation potential (Mt CO_2-e/yr)	51 - 54 Mt CO_2-e/yr	8 – 235 Mt CO_2-e/yr	9 – 70 Mt CO_2-e/yr	14 – 66 Mt CO_2-e/yr	19 Mt CO_2-e/yr
Per hectare mitigation potential (t CO_2-e/ha/yr)	3.5 - 29	0.03 – 27	0.5 - 7	Not available	Not available
Mitigation mechanism	Avoided emissions	Removal	Removal and avoided emissions	Reduced emissions	Reduced emissions
Type of change	Land use	Management	Management and land use	Management	Management
Co-benefits for farmers	Potential for paludiculture (productive use of wet peatlands)	Diversification of outputs protects against single crop failure	Improved water holding capacity and workability of soils, productivity	Lower input costs (feed, fertiliser, energy), soil health, productivity	Lower input costs
Societal co-benefits	Biodiversity, flood regulation, water quality	Improved water retention, microclimate, soil health, biodiversity	Improved water retention, soil health, biodiversity	Decreased nutrient runoff; decreased ammonia emissions	Decreased nutrient runoff; decreased ammonia emissions
Risks	CH4 emissions (although net GHG benefit), decrease in production	Non-native species' impact on biodiversity	Biochar and off-farm compost impacting soil health/biodiversity	Animal welfare; water quality impacts of feed additives	Water quality impacts of nitrification inhibitors

Overview of carbon farming methods (McDonald et al., 2021,p.14).

TRANSACTION COSTS AND BARRIERS TO ENTRY

According to NIE scholar Douglass North "institutions are formed precisely to reduce uncertainty in human exchange" (North, 1989). Transaction costs are the fees associated with defining, protecting, and enforcing property rights, which in the case of SCS must be applied to the proper monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of the sequestered carbon. If soil-based carbon is to be considered an economic asset, it must be treated as farmer's property and subject to the same rigorous evaluation and protection standards.

NIE emphasizes the importance of institutions in lowering transaction costs, thereby improving market efficiency and adoption of economically beneficial practices. Currently, SCS involves exorbitant MRV costs due to complex requirements and reporting technology. The EU-based LifeCarbonFarming scheme estimates verification and registration costs at €110,000–240,000 per farm over the first five years (Real Zero Europe, 2022). These costs include soil sampling and lab analysis, remote satellite soil modelling, site audits, and third-party consultations. High-quality, field based MRV can cost $5-15 per ton of CO_2 sequestered. In Australia, MRV costs under the govern mandated trading system, constitute 75% of the total cost for generating soil carbon credits (Bessemer, 2022).

High MRV costs disproportionately benefit larger agriculture operations who can afford the vast capital requirements of certain credit schemes. To control for these asymmetries, institutional

frameworks like the CRCF provide standardized protocols to reduce uncertainty and costs. In theory, a standardized certification process and verification methods reduce overhead for smallholders (McDonald et al., 2021). Centralized standards also lower the administrative burden and costs associated with privatized voluntary schemes. The CRCF provides a standardized QUALITY criteria (Quantification, Additionality, Long-term storage, and Sustainability) to account for the ability of carbon to be released in the atmosphere and ensure carbon farming activities have positive biodiversity co-benefits (Scherger, 2024). It is worth noting that these criteria and enforcement mechanisms are yet to be fully outlined.

The emergence of digital agriculture platforms like Rabobank's Carbon Bank and Yara's Agoro Carbon alliance are democratizing and streamlining the MRV process, utilizing remote satellite technology to measure soil carbon changes in complex agroecological farming systems (Grain, 2022). Reducing the labor, transportation, and lab-analysis costs of field soil-sampling, has the potential to significantly lower costs and barriers to entry for farmers.

Mental models and institutional change

Douglass North conceptualizes mental models as cognitive tools possessed by individuals to process the world around them "produced by the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, values, and norms" (North, 1995, p. 20). In the NIE framework, institutions can serve as potent mechanisms for influencing and reshaping mental models, able to better align individual decision making with greater social objectives. Institutions like the CRCF provide educational resources and practical demonstration projects that are already helping shape the perception of agroecological practices among European farmers. Institutions such as LIFE and Horizon Europe serve as the European funding instruments for R&D and pilot demonstration projects in the climate space. These projects are providing billions of euros to universities, NGOs, and companies to support soil health monitoring and carbon farming science (McDonald et al., 2021). The institutional support not only advances MRV and best practices, but also builds public trust in, and awareness of, SCS as a viable method for climate action.

European policymakers, venture capital firms, and agribusiness are optimistic about the future of the CRCF as a path toward agriculture's integration into the greater ECT system. Through SCS strategies like peatland restoration, agroforestry, cover cropping, reduced tillage, and livestock and manure management, policy makers believe carbon farming has the potential to mitigate up to 12% of the EU's total GHG emissions (McDonald et al. 2021). However, in the months since the

CRCF's approval, a wave of criticism has emerged among academics, civil society groups, scientists, and policy makers challenging the framing of carbon farming as a central pillar of the EU's broader climate action plan. The next section will offer a critical analysis of soil carbon sequestration (SCS) policies through a political economy framework, grounded in insights from agroecological science.

AGRARIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY CRITIQUE OF THE CRCF

Agrarian political economy provides a toolkit for dissecting how SCS policies enforce or contradict existing political and class relations and explores how states, institutions, and corporations shape agricultural transitions. In the context of the CRCF, it is critical to question how carbon markets are privatizing climate governance and transforming soil into a speculative asset. How is the state using SCS to attract green finance investments and how might corporations being co-opting these systems to consolidate influence and public goodwill? Who benefits from this vision of climate action? The following will attempt to address these concerns by examining the underlying structural and agroecological flaws of the NIE approach.

CARBON COMMODIFICATION AND THE FALSE PROMISE OF MARKET-BASED FIXES

The repurposing of farmland and ecosystems as sites for carbon sequestration commodifies land in new and potentially harmful ways. When soil becomes a tradable commodity, it risks detaching from real ecological outcomes and instead serving the interests of short-term capital gain. The growth potential of the carbon trading markets has attracted billions in venture capital and incited the world's largest agribusinesses to finance SCS programs of their own.

Between 2005 and 2020, Europe experienced 37% decline in total farms and an increase of 21% in average farm size during the same period (World Economic Forum, 2023). The period was marked by multinational mergers of seed, fertilizer, and grain producers and land purchases from smallholders. Following trends of agribusiness consolidation, SCS provides a new incentive for institutional investors to acquire farmland for the generation and sale of credits. The risk of land grabs for the use of SCS projects is already materializing in parts of the Global South. In 2023, the Dubai-based carbon offsetting firm Blue Carbon brokered a deal with the Kenyan government to acquire millions of hectares of the Mau Forest for generation of carbon credits (Marshall, 2023). Since the signing of the deal, over 700 native residents of the Ogiek community have been evicted

from their ancestral forest. This tragedy represents an alarming trend of companies developing green energy and sequestration projects at the cost of disenfranchisement and the creation of new negative externalities.

While developers and credit vendors may tout long-run environmental benefits of SCS schemes, current modelling suggests a far more skeptical outlook. Currently, most programs require carbon to be sequestered between 5-25 years, but the current scientific baseline for "permanent" and effective carbon storage is around 100 years (Grain, 2022). Carbon can remain in the atmosphere for centuries, so to meaningfully offset CO_2, programs must ensure storage methods are enforced beyond the timeframe of current schemes. Storage methods like SCS, reforestation, and biochar are prone to carbon release and reversals due to fires, tilling, drought, and land use.

The integration of the CRCF into the ETS also raises significant concerns about mistreatment of different greenhouse gases as interchangeable commodities, particularly (CO_2) and methane (CH_4). Methane is a short-lived climate pollutant (SCLP) that has over 80 times more warming potential than CO_2 over a 20-year time frame, making it one of the most important reduction targets for global warming mitigation (IPCC, 2021). According to climate researcher Yue Wang and her colleagues, one ton of sequestered carbon offsets the radiative effect of only 0.99kg of methane or 0.1 of nitrous oxide over 100 years (Wang et al., 2023).

While the CRCF includes strategies to reduce enteric methane via improved manure management and feed efficiency, these credits are awarded with equal value and similar timelines as CO_2 based credits for SCS restoration (McDonald et al., 2021). Rapid reductions in emissions and particularly greenhouse gases must be prioritized over carbon capture. While corporate claims of carbon-neutrality will remain governed by the EU Consumer Protection Agency, the CRCF may unintentionally provide a smokescreen for the livestock and agriculture sectors to falsely claim positive climate outcomes (Scherger, 2024).

FLAWS IN MRV AND DATA PRIVACY

In attempting to lower the barriers to access and transaction costs for SCS monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRV), institutions are cheapening the effectiveness and veracity of their programs. Remote sensing technology, championed as an accessible and accurate system for monitoring soil carbon content, suffers a variety of methodological limitations. Lower-cost model-based MRV largely relies on a body of historical soil data that is highly variable in different

environmental contexts and farming arrangements (McDonald et al., 2021). Data scarcity and modelling limitations regularly overestimate the actual amount of carbon sequestered.

In 2021, the Australia-based carbon credit platform Regen Network facilitated the sale of farm-generated carbon credits to Microsoft. Through a combination of grazing and pasture management practices, the farm credited by Regen was estimated to sequester 7 tons of carbon per hectare—an extraordinarily high rate compared to Australia's national average of 0.1 to 0.3 tons per hectare (Caballero, 2021). Since Regen Network publishes an open-source method for their MRV process, scientists discovered they were estimating the bulk density (dry weight of soil) rather than taking field samples. The estimates, captured using Microsoft's satellite imagery, were not accounting for soil gravel content (which contains no carbon) and were obscured by the farm's non-crop vegetation. The credits were still sold to Microsoft despite glaring MRV issues.

There is also a growing body of work in agrarian political economy that criticizes the consolidation of data among large agribusinesses. Digital platforms like satellite based MRV may shift transaction costs rather than reduce them outright as farmers often bear the costs associated with data security, privacy concerns, and technology dependency (Rotz, 2019). Digital MRV platforms like Rabobank's Carbon Bank and Yara's Agoro Alliance often require farmers to trade data ownership for platform access, thus risking losses of sensitive data due to cyber-attackers or partner vulnerabilities (Grain, 2022). This top-down approach of technological development also risks neglecting smallholders needs and catering to the diversity of agroecological practices not included in most MRV suites. These issues demonstrate the misalignment of digital MRV platforms with farmer autonomy and equity.

CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT MENTAL MODELS OF CSR

EU initiatives like the CRCF, LIFE, and Horizon Europe frame carbon sequestration and environmental research practices as both economically rational and socially beneficial. Yet these "win-win" solutions reflect a dominant corporate interest in their attempt to shift ethical responsibilities away from agribusiness emissions. Bridget O'Loughlin, a leading scholar in the field of agrarian political economy, argues that the transfer of the state's regulatory responsibility to a self-regulating private sector creates a corporate-centric vision of sustainability (O'Loughlin, 2009).

In providing opportunities for corporations to redefine their profit-seeking objectives under the guise of corporate social responsibility (CSR), the CRCF and other voluntary credit systems

further transform capitalism into an ethical order that masks deeper structural inequalities (O'Laughlin, 2009). Reflecting a Polanyian double movement, agribusiness's use of CSR in regaining public trust has weakened the case for stricter regulation. This is evident in the CRCF's lack of enforcement mechanisms or explicit bans on offsetting (Scherger, 2024).

CRCF-funded demonstration projects like EU Life and Horizon Europe further shape farmers' perceptions of agriculture best-practices, creating mental models that prioritize technological, capital-intensive methods. O'Laughlin's concept of neoliberal governance as a form of "new constitutionalism" explains how institutional designs can lock farmers into market-based, corporate-dependent environmental governance policies. Once these norms become institutionally entrenched via subsidies and credit systems, it becomes increasingly difficult for farmers to adopt alternative visions of agroecology and low-input agriculture.

RESISTANCE AND REFORM

The potential for manipulation within SCS demonstrates how agroecological principles may fundamentally conflict with the corporate-oriented design of the CRCF. It begs the broader question of whether CSR can really align with the interests of society when it is unburdened by state regulation. Grassroots food sovereignty movement like Via Campesina explicitly challenge this assertion of top-down corporate solutions, framing carbon farming as a threat to a sustainable food transition (Marshall, 2023). The movement argues for land redistribution, local food system re-localization, and public investment in agroecology as opposed to the commodification of carbon (Grain, 2024). A network of European civil society groups including La Via Campesina, Brussels-based NGO Carbon Market Watch, and Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, have collectively argued that the CRCF, in its current form institutionalizes significant loopholes and impairs the effectiveness of the EU's climate action plan (Diab 2024).

Given the momentum of market-based climate regulation, it's unlikely the European Parliament will scrap the CRCF in its entirety. However, by joining principles of NIE and agrarian political economy, there are key synergies for policy improvements. The CRCF must foremost strengthen its regulatory mechanisms by separating carbon removal actions from offsetting and prioritizes emissions reductions above all. The framework should enforce strict MRV protocols using third-party verification organizations with transparency methodologies that are unaligned with

commercial interests. Without a strong governance apparatus, integration of the CRCF into the ETS ultimately risks legitimizing temporary, reversable sequestration and sets a dangerous precedent of substituting rather than reducing emissions.

The scope of certified activities within the CRCF must also be carefully managed to prevent an oversupply of carbon credits that represent performative climate action. To earn credits, farmers should be obligated to create positive biodiversity and ecosystem resilience co-benefits. Practices that reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions such as feed additives, herd management, and optimized grazing strategies warrant a higher valuation of credits than carbon-based reductions (Wang et al., 2023). While the effectiveness and feasibility of these methods can vary depending on farming systems and geographies, the exponential warming effects of GHG should be accounted for in a credit-based system.

Lastly, there must be a democratization of the CRCF's institutional design and policy rollout. Grassroots organizations, farmers, and academics should be involved in the design of MRV, governance structures, and pilot programs to foster bottom-up knowledge that aligns with agroecological principles. Issued credits and research grants could also prioritize community-managed projects over agribusiness initiatives. This participatory governance approach would not only improve the transparency and widespread adoption of agroecological practices but reflect the needs of diverse farming communities across Europe rather than the will of financial speculators and MNCs.

The CRCF, while optimistic from a market-based framework, risks further consolidating corporate power and stifling climate solutions when analyzed through an agrarian political economy approach. The NIE framework is cognizant of efficient institutional design and enforcement mechanisms but overlooks the land consolidation, data manipulation, and greenwashing that occur when carbon is commodified. The creation of an agETS under the regulation of the current CRCF risks permanently institutionalizing carbon offsets as substitutes for real emissions reductions. The EU must transform the CRCF toward a framework rooted in public investment, democratized governance, and real agroecological principles. Soil carbon sequestration is not only a matter of how much carbon is stored–it's about who controls the process, who profits from it, and who is being left out of the future it creates.

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ESSAY 6: BEYOND INSTITUTIONS: A CLASS-BASED CRITIQUE OF CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN INDIA.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) has emerged as a leading paradigm for addressing the intertwined challenges of food security and climate change in India and globally. At its core, CSA aims to "increase productivity, enhance resilience, and reduce emissions" in the agricultural sector (Christ, 2024). In India, where agriculture remains a livelihood for millions and is highly vulnerable to climate variability, CSA initiatives have gained significant policy attention. Many analyses and policy frameworks for CSA have been rooted in the concepts of New Institutional Economics (NIE) – focusing on how institutions (the "rules of the game") shape farmers' incentives and choices (Faundez, 2016). The NIE approach, building on scholars like Douglass North, emphasizes improving governance structures, reducing transaction costs, and aligning market incentives to achieve efficient outcomes in agriculture. In the context of CSA, this often translates to proposals for better property rights, improved local institutions (such as water user groups or cooperatives), and market-based solutions (like crop insurance or carbon credits) to encourage farmers to adopt climate-smart practices.

However, a solely NIE-based explanation of CSA in India is insufficient. While NIE offers useful insights – for instance, highlighting the role of institutional arrangements and information in facilitating adaptation – it fails to capture the deeper structural inequalities and power relations that determine who can actually benefit from CSA. NIE tends to take a technocratic or "apolitical" view of development problems, often leaving issues of class, conflict, and social differentiation in the background (Taylor, 2017). As North's own framework has been critiqued, its focus on efficiency and formal institutions means that "social conflict" and power asymmetries are largely ignored (Faundez, 2016). In India's agrarian context – marked by vast inequalities in land ownership, caste and class hierarchies, and differentiated access to resources – an approach that overlooks class dynamics can only provide a partial understanding of CSA outcomes.

This essay argues that a Marxist class-based perspective provides a more penetrating analysis of CSA in India than the NIE framework. The central argument is that although NIE- inspired policies have shaped India's climate-smart agriculture programs (for example, through institutional reforms and incentive mechanisms), these policies often do not challenge existing class structures. As a result, CSA initiatives risk reproducing or even exacerbating rural inequalities: wealthier, landed farmers and agribusiness interests are better positioned to take advantage of CSA programs, while the rural poor and smallholders are frequently left behind. By contrast, a class-based lens foregrounds questions of "who owns what, who does what, who gets what, and what do they do with it?" in the context of CSA (Bernstein, 2017). This perspective – rooted in the agrarian political economy tradition (e.g. the work of Henry Bernstein on class dynamics) – directs attention to how benefits and burdens of climate policies are distributed along class lines. It reveals how land ownership and agrarian class relations determine access to CSA resources, and how processes like accumulation by dispossession or exclusion of marginal groups can occur under the banner of climate adaptation.

In the following sections, the paper first outlines the empirical context of Indian agriculture and climate-smart initiatives, then analyses how New Institutional Economics informs current CSA policies. It subsequently develops a class-based critique, drawing on Marxian concepts and empirical evidence to show the limitations of NIE in addressing structural inequality. A review of relevant literature from both frameworks further highlights the strengths and blind spots of each approach. The conclusion reiterates the importance of integrating agrarian class analysis into climate-smart agriculture policy to ensure a more equitable and effective response to climate change in India. In sum, NIE may help design institutions for CSA, but only a class perspective can uncover who truly benefits and who is excluded – a crucial consideration if climate policy is to avoid reinforcing existing injustices.

EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

India's agrarian landscape is defined by both structural inequality and diverse climate vulnerabilities. Small and marginal farmers (those cultivating less than 2 hectares) make up the overwhelming majority of India's farming community – over 86% of all farmers – yet they control only about 47% of the total crop area (Bera, 2018). According to the Agriculture Census 2015–16,

approximately 126 million farmers fall into this small/marginal category, with an average holding of merely ~0.6 hectares (Bera, 2018). In contrast, a minority of medium and large farmers command a disproportionately large share of land. This skewed land ownership means that agrarian class divisions are sharp: a stratum of relatively well-off landowners coexists with a vast population of smallholders, tenant farmers, landless agricultural labourers, and other rural working poor. Such stratification has implications for any agricultural policy – including CSA – because access to land and resources often determines who can participate or benefit. For instance, the government's own data note that reaching millions of fragmented small farms with new technologies and support is challenging (Bera, 2018). Many smallholders lack capital, information, or secure tenure, which can hinder adoption of innovations intended to build climate resilience.

Climatically, Indian agriculture is highly heterogeneous and increasingly under stress from climate change. The country spans a range of agro-ecological zones –from arid and semi- arid regions prone to drought, to the rainfed rice belts of eastern India, to areas dependent on glacial meltwater in the Himalayas, and coastal deltaic regions vulnerable to cyclones and salinity intrusion. Rainfed farming (with little or no irrigation) occupies roughly half of India's sown area and contributes about 40% of total food production in the country (Baruah, 2023). These rainfed areas, concentrated in central, eastern, and peninsular India, are especially vulnerable to the vagaries of the monsoon. Rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, and an increase in extreme events have already been observed. Farmers widely report perceptible changes such as hotter summers, more erratic and decreased rainfall, and an uptick in drought frequency (Datta, Behera, and Rahut, 2022). Scientific assessments project that climate change could significantly depress crop yields in the coming decades – for example, simulations indicate rainfed rice yields may decline and irrigated wheat yields could suffer with warming and shifting precipitation (Singh et al., 2013). Beyond crops, climate impacts are evident in water stress, land degradation, and livestock productivity declines in heat- stressed regions (Singh et al., 2013). These challenges intensify existing agrarian crises, as seen in recent years by farmer distress and even suicides during successive droughts.

In response, the Indian state (often with international partners) has launched several programs that can be grouped under the umbrella of climate-smart or climate-resilient agriculture. National initiatives include the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) under India's climate

action plan, and the National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) launched by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 2011. NICRA is a flagship program aiming to develop and propagate climate-resilient farming techniques. It has multiple components: strategic research on drought-/flood-tolerant crop varieties and climate impacts, technology demonstrations in village clusters, and institutional interventions to empower communities (Singh et al., 2013).

For instance, NICRA established Village Climate Risk Management Committees (VCRMCs) in pilot villages and created "Climate-Smart Villages" to demonstrate a portfolio of adaptive practices (such as water harvesting structures, stress-tolerant seed varieties, new irrigation methods, and even custom-hiring centres where small farmers can rent equipment) (Singh et al., 2013). These pilots showed encouraging results in helping farmers cope with weather variability, and the program has emphasized scaling up such interventions. Another prominent example is Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) in Andhra Pradesh – a state-level program (since 2015) to shift farmers towards agroecological practices that reduce reliance on synthetic inputs. ZBNF, championed by the Andhra Pradesh government in partnership with civil society, is presented as a "climate-resilient, regenerative agriculture" initiative aimed at improving soil health, lowering farmers' costs, and enhancing their adaptive capacity (UN Environment, 2018). This program has drawn support from international agencies and private foundations: the UN Environment Programme and BNP Paribas bank helped set up the Sustainable India Finance Facility to fund ZBNF's expansion, reflecting an innovative blend of public initiative and private financing for climate-smart agriculture (UN Environment, 2018).

It is important to recognize regional disparities and actor roles in these adaptation efforts. Climate risks in India are not uniform – for example, farmers in drought-prone Telangana or Rajasthan face very different challenges (and state support systems) than those in flood-prone Bihar or heat-stressed Punjab. Similarly, within any region, class and social position mediate vulnerability: a wealthy cash-crop farmer with a tubewell and crop insurance will fare better in a drought than a landless farm labourer or a small sharecropper. Both state and private actors are active in promoting CSA. The Indian state plays a central role through research institutions (ICAR's network for NICRA), extension services, subsidy programs (like climate-resilient seed mini-kits or irrigation schemes), and insurance schemes.

At the same time, private actors and market forces are increasingly influential – from agribusiness companies providing drought- tolerant seed varieties or weather advisory apps, to NGOs and international donors piloting climate-smart village projects, and corporate CSR programs that fund water conservation or new technologies in farming communities. For instance, a major Indian agribusiness, ITC, has its own Climate-Smart Agriculture initiative working with farmers in its supply chains (ITC, 2025). These multi- actor engagements mean that CSA in India is a contested space, where different interests (public good, profit, farmers' welfare) intersect. The empirical reality is that access to resources – land, credit, information, technology – and power structures – who gets a say in local institutions or policy design – greatly influence outcomes. This context sets the stage for examining how New Institutional Economics and class-based analysis, respectively, make sense of CSA within India's agrarian political economy.

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE THROUGH THE LENS OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS

The popularity of the NIE framework in explaining and designing CSA policies can be seen in how Indian climate-agriculture programs emphasize institutions, incentives, and good governance. New Institutional Economics, as articulated by Douglass North and others, posits that institutions – the formal and informal "rules of the game" – fundamentally shape economic performance by structuring incentives and reducing uncertainty (North, 1991). In practice, NIE-influenced analyses focus on issues like property rights, contractual arrangements, transaction costs (the costs of arranging economic exchanges or cooperation), and the role of organizations in enforcing rules. Applying this to climate-smart agriculture, an NIE approach asks: what institutional or market failures are hindering farmers from adopting climate-resilient practices, and how can we reform institutions or introduce incentives to fix that?

Indian CSA policies indeed reflect many NIE assumptions. A key theme is improving governance structures at various levels so that farmers can respond better to climate risks. For example, programs often promote decentralized decision-making and community-level institutions to manage resources adaptively. Under NICRA, the establishment of Village Climate Risk Management Committees is a clear NIE-style intervention – creating local organizations with defined rules and roles to collectively manage climate risks (such as deciding on water sharing

during drought or organizing community seed banks). By formally instituting these committees, the program attempts to lower the transaction costs of collective action (it is easier for farmers to adopt new practices or infrastructure if they have a local group coordinating efforts) and improve information flow about climate-resilient options. This aligns with the NIE idea that institutions can solve coordination problems and enable mutually beneficial outcomes that would not occur in their absence.

Another NIE principle is setting appropriate incentives – often market-based – to encourage desired behaviours (North, 2017). In the CSA context, this can involve financial instruments and property rights that motivate farmers to invest in long-term resilience (Taylor, 2017). One prominent example is the push for weather-indexed crop insurance and credit schemes (Clapp and Isakson, 2021). By developing insurance markets (often through public-private partnerships with insurance companies), policymakers use a market mechanism to reduce individual farmers' risk, theoretically encouraging them to take up new crops or practices that might be more climate-resilient (Aggarwal et al., 2018).

The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (Prime Minister's Crop Insurance Scheme), launched in 2016, heavily subsidizes premiums to vastly expand crop insurance coverage (PMFBY, n.d.). The logic is NIE-consistent: mitigate risk (a factor outside farmers' control) through an institutional fix (insurance contracts), so that farmers have the confidence or secure expectation needed to adapt. Similarly, clear property rights and resource tenure are emphasized as prerequisites for CSA. Land titling and tenancy reforms, where attempted, are justified on grounds that farmers with secure rights are more likely to invest in soil conservation, tree-planting or other adaptive measures (because they expect to reap the future benefits) (Ribot, 2014; Meinzen-Dick, 2014). While large-scale land reform is politically contentious, some state programs try to incorporate tenant farmers or sharecroppers in benefit schemes to correct the institutional exclusion that otherwise occurs when only landowners are recognized (Deininger, Jin and Nagarajan, 2009).

Market-based incentives also appear in innovative financing for CSA. In Andhra Pradesh's ZBNF program, private capital was mobilized through the Sustainable India Finance Facility, involving a multinational bank (BNP Paribas) (UN Environment, 2018). This reflects an NIE-style faith in markets and private sector solutions: by creating a funding vehicle with potentially market-linked returns (there has been discussion of monetizing the environmental benefits of ZBNF, such as

carbon sequestration or water savings), the program seeks to align farmers' practices with global climate finance (Das, Khurana and Gulati, 2024). Even the concept of carbon credits for sustainable agriculture – while still nascent in India – is on the table (National Indian Carbon Coalition, 2025). For example, if farmers adopt conservation agriculture that increases soil carbon, they could potentially earn carbon credits to sell in markets, creating a monetary incentive for CSA. This approach treats climate mitigation/adaptation as a market opportunity: elites in NIE circles often argue that defining tradable rights or credits (whether for carbon, water, etc.) and allowing market exchange will drive efficient outcomes. The World Bank and other development agencies promote such climate-smart subsidies or payments for ecosystem services as win-win incentives (World Bank, 2025).

Another hallmark of NIE is reducing information asymmetries and transaction costs. CSA programs in India frequently leverage ICT tools, extension reforms, and knowledge platforms to disseminate climate information. For instance, climate information services (like SMS weather alerts or agro-advisories) are provided to farmers so they can make informed decisions – an approach that assumes better information (an institutional input) will correct the market failure of farmers planting crops based on outdated climate patterns (CIAT, 2025). The Soil Health Card initiative (while not explicitly a climate program) similarly helps farmers know their soil profile and choose appropriate inputs, potentially improving resilience (Government of India, 2025). These efforts echo North's idea that institutions (here, extension systems and information networks) exist to "reduce the obstacles arising from imperfect and asymmetrical information" in transactions (Faundez, 2016). In this case, the 'transaction' is adopting a new farm practice; by lowering information costs (through outreach and demonstration), the hope is more farmers will transact – i.e., switch to climate- smart methods.

Indian CSA policy often frames the problem as one of institutional failure rather than structural inequality. For example, if small farmers are not adopting drought-resistant seeds, the NIE-influenced explanation might be that seed markets are not reaching them or property rights to seed technologies are unclear, rather than examining if those farmers have the necessary land, credit, or social power (World Economic Forum, 2024). The solutions then focus on institutional fixes: improving supply chains, forming cooperatives, tweaking subsidies. Under NICRA, the institutional interventions component explicitly looked at linking climate initiatives with existing

programs and strengthening village institutions to take advantage of new technologies (Singh et al., 2013). By integrating climate adaptation into local development planning (e.g., linking NICRA pilots with village councils' plans), the approach tries to "get the institutions right" so that markets and governance deliver CSA benefits efficiently (Rodrik, 2007).

These efforts have yielded some positive outcomes. For instance, studies from NICRA pilot villages show higher adoption of stress-tolerant crop varieties and improved farm incomes compared to non-intervention villages, that is attributed to climate-smart technologies and practices (Samuel et al., 2024; Hebsale Mallappa and Pathak, 2023). One study noted that farm incomes in a NICRA village were over 40% higher than in a nearby non-adoptive village after a package of CSA interventions, indicating the potential gains when institutional support is provided (Samuel et al., 2024).

Das, Ansari, and Ghosh (2022) note that farmers' often prioritised CSA practices based on economic incentives, giving greatest weight to interventions that boosted income and productivity. This underscores the NIE notion that properly aligned incentives (here, higher income from a new practice) can drive adaptation. Additionally, in regions like Haryana and Bihar, "Climate-Smart Village" projects (supported by international research organizations) combined weather insurance, resilient seeds, and community plans, which reduced climate risk and transaction costs for participating farmers (CCAFS, 2013). From an NIE perspective, these examples suggest that with the right institutions – functioning markets, secure rights, effective local organizations – small farmers will adopt climate-smart agriculture, as they become economically viable and less risky.

However, what the NIE lens often overlooks is who is able to take advantage of these improved institutions and incentives. By largely treating farmers as a homogeneous set of rational individuals responding to price signals or institutional cues, NIE can mask the class differentiations and power imbalances that influence behaviour. It assumes a level playing field once reforms are in place. Thus, while NIE-driven CSA policies bring important elements (like risk reduction and better coordination), they may inadvertently serve those already better positioned, unless explicit measures address equity. The NIE lens itself does not fully account for these equity issues, which necessitates a turn to a class-based critique for a more complete picture.

CLASS-BASED CRITIQUE: WHO BENEFITS FROM CSA AND WHO IS EXCLUDED?

A Marxist or class-based perspective shifts the focus from abstract institutions to the concrete social relations of production and power in India's countryside. It asks: in whose interests are CSA policies designed and implemented? Who gains access to resources – land, water, finance – under these programs, and who does not? What are the underlying agrarian class relations that shape these outcomes? By interrogating CSA through questions of class, we uncover dynamics that NIE's framework glosses over.

Land ownership and control over resources are foundational to class differentiation in rural India. A small minority of farmers hold relatively large landholdings, while the majority till small plots or work land they do not own (Saini and Chowdhury, 2023). This has direct implications for CSA. Many climate- smart practices (e.g., planting trees on farms, investing in irrigation infrastructure, or shifting to resilient crop varieties) require at least some control over land and capital. Landed, wealthier farmers are inherently in a better position to adopt such measures, as they have both the incentive to invest in their own land and the collateral or savings to do so (Singh and Rani, 2025). Landless labourers or tenant farmers, by contrast, lack secure rights and often cannot make long-term changes on the land they cultivate. CSA programs that provide subsidies or inputs typically channel them to the registered landowner – meaning sharecroppers or tenants might be bypassed entirely. This illustrates how the class structure of landholding can determine who accesses CSA benefits. Without explicit pro-poor provisions, climate-smart subsidies can become another form of rent accruing to the landed class.

In some NICRA villages, the "progressive farmers" who led demonstrations were often better-off villagers with larger holdings or prior access to irrigation, since they were more likely to successfully showcase new technologies (Vedeld, Mathur and Bharti, 2019). Smaller farmers sometimes struggled to adopt the demonstrated techniques due to lack of funds or higher perceived risk. Even something as straightforward as a drought-resilient seed might be adopted more by medium farmers who can afford the input and any complementary fertilizer, whereas the poorest farmers saved their own seeds and did not benefit from the new variety. This pattern aligns with the critique that NIE- inspired programs assume all farmers can respond if institutions are fixed, but in reality, class and wealth mediate uptake. As agrarian scholar Henry Bernstein reminds us,

one must disaggregate "the farmer" and ask "who owns what? who gets what?" (2017). In NICRA's case, those who owned more land or assets were often the ones who got more of the new resources (be it subsidized equipment through custom-hiring centres or priority in training programs) (Sahoo et al., 2025).

Moreover, agribusiness and large capitalist farmers can harness CSA in ways that small producers cannot. Climate-smart agriculture in theory includes low-tech, traditional practices, but in policy it often also involves modern technologies and services (improved seeds, drip irrigation kits, crop insurance, weather advisories) which are commercial products (Taylor, 2017). This creates a market that agribusiness players are eager to serve. For instance, seed and biotech companies promote drought-tolerant hybrids or stress-tolerant genetically modified crops as "climate-smart" solutions (Newell and Taylor, 2017). Fertilizer companies rebrand products as climate-friendly (efficient nitrogen fertilizers to reduce emissions) (GRAIN, 2015). These firms stand to profit from widespread adoption of such technologies – an example of what critical scholars term "accumulation by adaptation," where economic elites find new profit avenues in climate adaptation efforts (Thomas, 2023). Marcus Taylor (2017) has pointed out that the global CSA agenda often dovetails with corporate interests, validating existing policy agendas and minimizing questions of power and inequality. In India, one could argue that CSA programs provide fresh markets for agribusiness under the guise of public good. For example, if a state government subsidizes micro-irrigation as a climate measure, the companies selling drip irrigation sets enjoy a windfall, while wealthier farmers with large orchards can more easily take advantage of the subsidy (since even subsidized drip systems require the farmer to cover part of the cost and have the knowledge to maintain the system).

Small farmers might find the upfront cost or technical know-how prohibitive – thus the benefit skews upward to those with capital. David Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" refers to how neoliberal capitalism opens new fronts of commodification by dispossessing people of common resources or rights (2020). Climate initiatives can become a vehicle for this if not carefully managed. For instance, imagine a carbon-forestry project in the name of climate mitigation that restricts villagers' access to common lands, effectively dispossessing them (Mukpo et al., 2024). While this example is more mitigation-focused, even adaptation/CSA can lead to subtle dispossessions. If water resources are scarce, a powerful farmer might deepen his borewell

(with state climate subsidies) and inadvertently lower the water table, dispossessing neighbouring smallholders of shallow well access (SIWI, 2022). Or if new profitable opportunities (like farming carbon-credit generating crops) arise, large agribusinesses might lease or buy up land from smallholders, pushing them out – a process of land consolidation justified by climate-smart rhetoric (GRAIN, 2022). Indeed, history shows that in times of agrarian stress (like droughts), poorer farmers are forced to sell land or assets to richer ones – climate change could exacerbate this unless policies actively shield vulnerable groups (Gomiero, 2016). A class perspective highlights these processes of accumulation by the better-off at the expense of the marginalized, which an institutional efficiency perspective might overlook.

Additionally, class intersects with caste, gender, and other social relations in rural India, compounding exclusion in CSA programs. For instance, many of the poorest rural households are Dalits or from indigenous communities (Adivasis) who often have tenuous land rights (Das, 2016). They might be cultivating forest fringe lands or grazing commons, which CSA schemes rarely target (since such schemes usually work through formal agriculture departments and land records). There is evidence that many climate adaptation funds tend to flow to relatively developed regions or to farmers who are already better connected to extension networks (Patel et al., 2023).

Marginalized communities, without political influence, may receive less support. Jesse Ribot's work on climate vulnerability underscores that "vulnerability is produced by on-the-ground social inequality, unequal access to resources, poverty, poor infrastructure, and lack of representation" – not just by climate hazards themselves (2014). This means if CSA policies do not tackle those underlying inequalities, they may do little for those most at risk. A village elite might capture the local climate committee (ensuring, say, that a water harvesting structure is built near his fields). Such elite capture of resources – a well-documented phenomenon in rural development – is a class issue that NIE's faith in institutions often naively underestimates. Ribot (2014) also notes that adaptation interventions can end up "reinforcing dominant power structures" through their top-down approach, which seems to happen when local elites use new institutions to solidify their control.

A class-based critique also points out how labour and class exploitation dynamics persist under CSA. For example, wealthier farmers might adopt zero-tillage planters or mechanized direct-seeding of crops (to conserve soil moisture and reduce emissions) (S M Sehgal Foundation, 2023).

This is climate-smart. But one side effect could be a reduced demand for agricultural labour (fewer labourers needed to till or transplant). The landless labour class, already among the most vulnerable, could lose work opportunities or face lower wages. In the absence of alternative livelihoods or compensation, a measure that is eco-friendly may hurt labouring classes' income – essentially transferring the cost of adaptation onto the poor. Marxist agrarian analysis would flag this as a form of hidden exploitation: the gains of adaptation (higher yields, lower costs) accrue to the employer class, while labourers bear the adjustment cost. NIE, focused on aggregate efficiency, might not register this social cost.

In summary, the class-based critique underscores that climate-smart agriculture in India does not occur on a level playing field. It is filtered through the sieve of class structure: those with more land, wealth, and influence tend to extract greater benefits (higher yields, new income streams, state support), while those with less often struggle to participate or may even be adversely affected. Far from an automatic "triple win," CSA can produce winners and losers aligned with existing class divisions (World Bank, 2025). Ignoring this risk – as a narrow NIE approach might – could mean that well-intentioned climate policies end up reinforcing rural inequalities. Many CSA efforts, as currently constituted, tend to work better for larger farmers and agribusiness interests than for marginal farmers, unless specific countermeasures are in place. Addressing this requires recognizing agrarian class relations as central, not peripheral, to the story of climate adaptation.

CONCLUSION

This essay critically compared the explanatory power of New Institutional Economics (NIE) and Marxist class-based perspectives in analysing climate-smart agriculture (CSA) initiatives in India. While NIE-inspired policies have provided useful institutional innovations—such as clear property rights, market incentives, decentralized governance structures, and improved access to climate information—this analysis revealed critical limitations in addressing structural inequalities inherent to Indian agriculture. As demonstrated through examples like NICRA's technology dissemination, ZBNF's agroecological interventions, and government-backed crop insurance schemes, these institutional solutions often unintentionally reinforce existing class disparities, benefiting larger farmers and agribusinesses at the expense of smallholders, landless workers, and marginalized rural communities.

While NIE scholars such as Douglass North (2017) and Elinor Ostrom (2021) offer valuable insights into institutional design and the role of incentives, critical agrarian scholars—including Henry Bernstein (2017), Michael Levien (2018), and Marcus Taylor (2017)—caution against neglecting the fundamental class relations and power asymmetries that shape rural outcomes. The empirical realities in India reaffirm Henry Bernstein's central thesis: agrarian class dynamics determine who can effectively utilize agricultural innovations, and who remains excluded or adversely impacted.68 Ignoring such structural dimensions means that even well-intentioned CSA interventions risk perpetuating or deepening existing inequalities.

Ultimately, addressing climate change in agriculture demands explicit recognition and incorporation of class analysis into institutional policy frameworks. Effective CSA must go beyond technocratic efficiency and market incentives, embedding principles of social justice, equity, and redistribution into its core. Policies that consciously bridge institutional innovation with targeted class-aware reforms—such as pro-poor subsidies, secure land tenure for tenants and smallholders, fair labour practices, and genuine inclusion in governance structures—are essential. Only through such integrated, equitable approaches can climate-smart agriculture deliver on its promise to enhance resilience sustainably, ensuring that adaptation benefits reach those most vulnerable rather than reinforcing the status quo.

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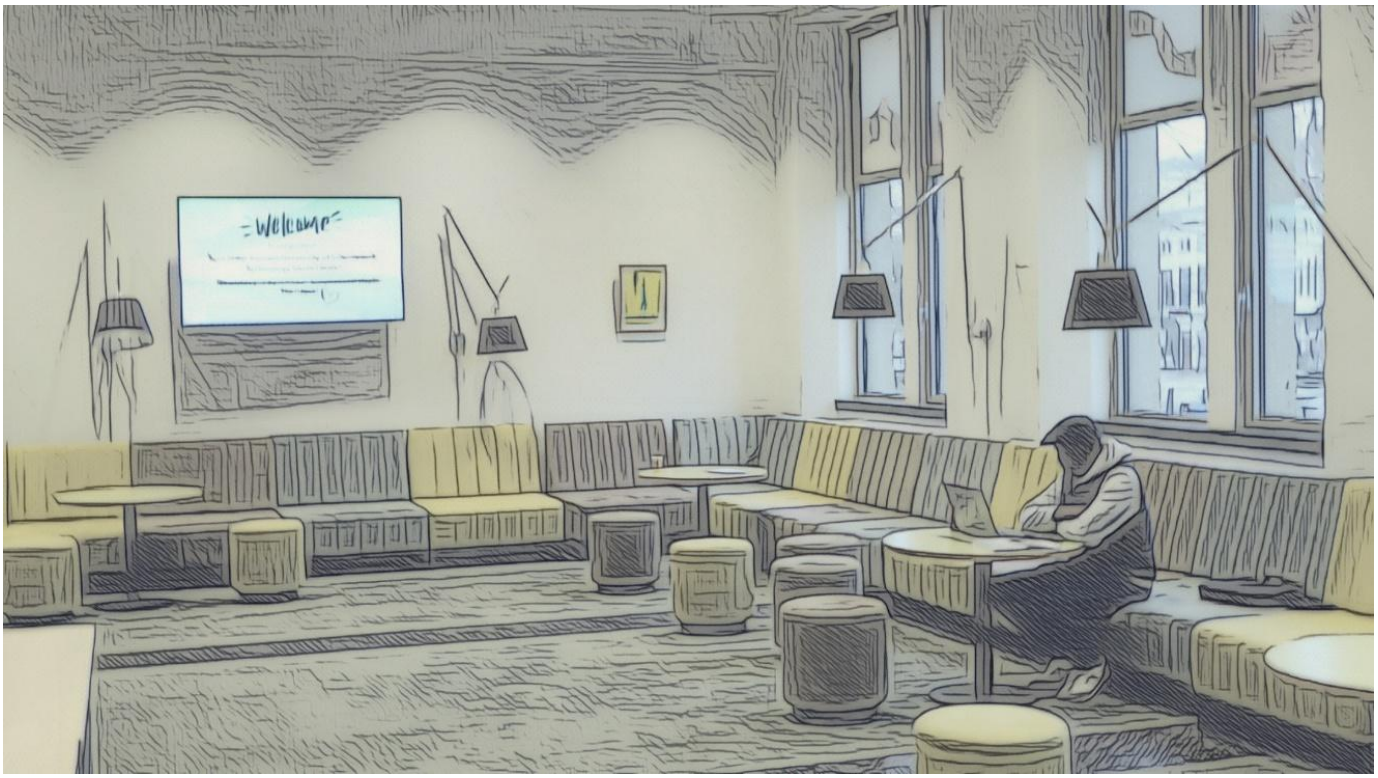
CHAPTER TWO: LISTENING TO GENDER, VOICES BEYOND POLICY



Lounge

ESSAY 1: FEAR OF DYING ALONE

By Maialen Aginagalde Catalan. SJP. Basque Country

REFLECTION

The motivation to analyse cohousing as a potential alternative to the nuclear family ideal comes from one of our class discussions. I remember the professor telling us about how several women, who were her mentors and had been involved for decades in the feminist movement in India, felt alone when they got older, without the support of the communities they had given so much to.

That made me think of how internalised we have the nuclear family model and the hierarchy of relationships in which the partner occupies the most important role. I believe this hierarchy is still present even in left-wing activist spaces where capitalist individualism is criticised, care is valued in its many forms, the importance of caring for friends is emphasised, and the family is understood in an expanded and nonconsanguineous way. Precisely, as the example in class showed, as one grows older, one runs the risk of – consciously or unconsciously – relying more on one's nuclear family, and those who do not fit into this framework can be left behind. Rather than an individual decision, I believe that in many cases it is a consequence of a system that, in addition to favouring the nuclear family over other relational ties, takes time and energy away from us to cultivate other meaningful relationships.

The point is that this issue becomes more real as you get older, and that is where the fear of dying 'alone' comes from. Given that Spanish society is ageing considerably and there is an increased phenomenon of loneliness – especially among the elderly – I thought it would be interesting to explore the alternative of cohousing to understand if it can challenge the nuclear family model and mitigate the problems it entails.

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that the nuclear family model ideal does not represent the reality of Spanish society and that its ties to romantic and blood relationships leave behind whoever does

not fit into those relational models. I explore the concept of cohousing with its potential benefits and drawbacks, arguing it is a community-building alternative for those left outside the traditional family ideal.

In the first part, I explore the negative impacts of the universalisation of the nuclear and extended family and its race and class component through Linda Nicholson's work, relating it to the family breakdown phenomenon in Spain. Then, I problematise the hierarchisation of relationships and the lack of care towards non-blood or non-romantic relationships, addressing the gendered pressure of finding a partner and sharing Sophie Lewis' argument that the problem is rooted in the concept of family and its privatisation of care.

In the second part, I delve into cohousing – a housing project with partially communal spaces where care is collectivised – to understand whether the communitarian values of this relational model are higher – or not – than the private values of the family, as well as its potential risk of discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

One out of nine citizens in Spain live alone. According to a report by the CEU-CEFAS Demographic Observatory (2024, p. 24), Western societies, and Spain in particular, have a serious and growing problem of loneliness and loss of family ties. The report warns of high rates of family breakdown, but what family is breaking down? The purpose of this essay is to understand the critique of the nuclear family and the concept of family itself in the Spanish context through the works of Linda Nicholson and Sophie Lewis and to explore cohousing as a potential alternative for community building outside the traditional family framework.

ON THE UNIVERSALISATION OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The report by CEU-CEFAS (2024) describes findings on different types of loneliness: that of the elderly who live alone, the children who 'only' have one parent or single-person households. This alone shows that the idea of the nuclear family – that of a healthy and happy gender-

conforming mom and dad with their perfect biological children – does not correspond to most families in Spain anymore. One can even wonder if it ever did. Linda Nicholson's work from 1997 (p. 27) is not at all out of date when she argues that these categories of 'alternative' families carry a shameful way of living with them. According to Nicholson (p. 28), the nuclear family model that became popularised after World War II was an alternative to previous familiar models. Nevertheless, it has been presented as natural or historically universal, "legitimizing certain family types over others on the basis of dubious historical assumptions".

Apart from thinking of the traditional family as a heterosexual couple with offspring that live in the same household, the extended family based on more or less distant relatives is still quite hegemonic. Nicholson (1997, p. 29) argues that this idea of extended family is still universalised and associates the 'nuclear' with kinship. This is truly problematic as it leaves everyone who does not have a relationship with their relatives as broken, incomplete and ashamed. This has an impact on people's mental health, as explained by the CEU-CEFAS (2024, p. 10) report and is particularly hard at times like Christmas when the 'normal' thing to do is spending time with the family – understood as the nuclear or extended family explained above.

Another implicit characteristic of the nuclear family model is that it has a class and race component. According to Nicholson (1997, p. 34), the emergence of the ideal family in the 1950s in the United States coincided with the division of society into two groups: those who succeeded economically and those who were left unemployed. Not surprisingly, racism was one of the main factors that determined whether someone fell into one category or another, leading to an increased correlation between African Americans and poverty. During this time, racialised and poor people showed family characteristics that moved away from the nuclear family ideal. To this day, this reality has not changed, as the report by CEU-CEFAS (2024, p. 10) shows that family breakdown does not impact every citizen in Spain equally. The prevalence of unwanted loneliness is considerably higher in people who are struggling to make ends meet, who are unemployed, who have lower educational backgrounds, who have physical or mental issues or who have functional diversity. Similarly to Nicholson's example, many of these realities are positively correlated with being a racialised person in Spain as well.

BEYOND THE CRITIQUE OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY: UNDERSTANDING THE HIERARCHY OF RELATIONSHIPS

It is said that times have changed, and what was not traditional some decades ago is nowadays accepted in certain geographies. For example, in Spain, same-sex marriage is legal, having children as a homosexual couple is not uncommon, and single parenthood has become more widespread. This model of a white heterosexual, middle-class couple with gender-conforming children might be challenged, but what is still very present and enrooted in the idea of family is the need for a romantic relationship. The types of family might have evolved, but they still only accept romantic and blood relationships within their framework.

Embedded in a hierarchy of relationships, with the couple and the blood relatives taking precedence over friendships, the urgency to find a partner becomes pressing. The fear of dying alone comes from this popular belief that if you are single, your life will be incomplete, you will not have a family as traditionally understood, and you will die unhappy. Consequently, it is not enough to rethink the ideal of the nuclear family but to completely challenge the understanding of family as partner and kinship. A reflection is needed on the importance and recognition we give to the people in our lives to whom we have no romantic or blood ties. Something worth noting is that this societal pressure to find a partner, at least in Spain, perpetuates gender stereotypes, as it targets mainly women. If a woman grows older and she is still single, she will be a spinster or *solterona* – pictured as decrepit, undesirable and lonely – while in the case of a man, he will be a silver fox or *soltero de oro*[1] – desirable, a good catch and living his best life.

Some authors, such as Sophie Lewis (2022, p. 26), do not only challenge the idea of the nuclear family but the concept of family overall, reflecting on how naturalised it is as a mode of social organisation. The author (p. 30) explores the arguments in favour and against abolishing the family, arguing that even if the types of family are different, the power dynamics within it remain problematic. Hence, acknowledging the nuclear family model as cisheteropatriarchal, classist, colonial and not representative might not be enough. Lewis (p. 30) points to the privatisation of care as one of the key features of every family type as an argument in favour of the abolition of the whole concept.

COHOUSING AS A COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE TO THE PRIVATISATION WITHIN THE FAMILY

As a response to the unwanted loneliness, the speculation in the real estate sector and the privatisation of care, a Danish alternative has been popularised in Spain: cohousing. “Cohousing communities are resident-developed and managed cooperative neighborhoods where privately-owned […] self-sufficient household units are clustered around a ‘common house’ with shared facilities” (Sullivan-Catlin, 2014, p.40). This author (pp. 40-42) researches the tension between the privacy and independence of the nuclear family and communal living where care is taken into the public domain. When studying cohousing projects with small children involved, Heather Sullivan-Catlin (p. 54) found out that the nuclear family values were still strong and sometimes confronting the communal identity of the space.

Some cohousing projects in the Basque Country have planted the seed for a movement that is attracting more and more people, weaving a network of housing cooperatives on a secondment basis. One of the key values of the projects in this network is precisely community recovery based on solidarity, mutual support, care and attention to vulnerability and dependence (Koobizitza, no date). One of the longest-standing projects, Arterra Bizimodu, is an ecovillage that boosts activities towards self-sufficiency and explores other economies that reflect a new balance between the personal and the collective. Others, like Egunsentia, are specifically focused on the elderly and advocate that communal, affective and nurturing environments can facilitate good ageing. These and many other cohousing projects challenge the privatisation of care in the nuclear or expanded family model by focusing on the interdependence of people and supporting a partially communal life to confront the capitalist and individualistic logic of today's society.

However, as with any other community project, cohousing should be critically analysed so that it does not perpetuate classist, colonial or patriarchal attitudes. María Paula Rodríguez (2025) highlights in a recent article some of the risks of housing cooperatives, such as the risk of discrimination based on “preserving residential homogeneity”. Subjective factors can impact the decision of accepting someone or not into a cohousing project, potentially leading to exclusion in terms of class, race or religion. As potential measures, the author suggests regulatory measures for the application process to cooperatives and transparency on the criteria of selection. Most

importantly, collective critical reflection and educational programs are needed to prevent discriminatory practices.

CONCLUSION

In a more and more ageing, diverse and unequal society where the traditional family model is far from the norm, questioning the concept of nuclear and extended family, the hierarchies of relationships and the private nature of the ties we cultivate becomes urgent. When seeking collective alternatives that challenge the individualism and depoliticisation rooted in capitalism, cohousing could be an opportunity – if critically approached – to build a different relational model based on reconnection with the environment and community care.

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[1] Note that in Spanish both terms contain the word *soltero*, meaning single. The feminine word has the pejorative suffix -*ona*, while the masculine includes *de oro*, meaning ‘of gold’.

PRECARIOUS INCORPORATIONS: EMBERA TRANS WOMEN, RURAL LABOUR, AND RESISTANCE IN COLOMBIA'S COFFEE ECONOMY

By *Catalina Alviz Donoso*. AFES. Chile.

INTRODUCTION

Like many other countries and contexts, trans women in Colombia face systemic discrimination, economic precarity, and multiple forms of violence (Colombia Diversa, 2024). Despite some legal advancements, a significant gap persists between legal frameworks and lived realities (Sierra-Puentes, 2023; Roldan, 2025). These inequalities are sustained by a cisnormative and racialised capitalist logic that turns trans bodies and experiences into objects of exclusion and economic exploitation (Segato, 2014; Smith and Mac, 2018; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021).

In this context, trans women are often pushed into highly precarious informal work. In 2016, only 5.3% of transgender people in Colombia had formal employment (OAI, 2016 cited in Roldan, 2025), with "transsexualised jobs", like hairdressing or sex work, being common (Correa Quintero, 2017; Lozano Beltrán, 2020; Roldan, 2025). This essay focuses on the case of the Embera transgender women, self-identified as "M*ariposas del Café*" (the coffee buterflies) and often called "*wërapara*" (fake woman) within their indigenous communities (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Their forced migration from indigenous territories due to binary and cisnormative gender norms is an example of the pressures compelling trans women into precarious labour (Millán Valencia, 2019; Tabares Giraldo, 2019; El País, 2024).

Based on this case, the paper asks: How does cisnormative and racialised capitalism structure the incorporation of transgender Embera women into precarious rural labour markets in Colombia, and how does their gender affirmation under such conditions become a form of agency and resistance? To answer this, this essay uses sex work literature to draw some parallels.

Transgender women often also end up in sex work due to systemic discrimination, lack of formal opportunities, and economic necessity (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014; Smith and Mac,

2018; Orchard *et al.*, 2020; Moncayo Quevedo, Pérez-Arizabaleta and Reyes Sevillano, 2022). However, some studies also show that, under certain conditions, sex work can offer forms of gender affirmation, economic independence, support networks, and forms of self-care for those that have been denied formal employment opportunities (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014; Orchard *et al.*, 2020; Sánchez-Fuentes, Parra-Barrera and Moyano, 2021; Moncayo Quevedo, Pérez- Arizabaleta and Reyes Sevillano, 2022).

This paper argues that both in the case of sex work and of rural seasonal labour in Colombia, capitalism incorporates trans women through their structural precarity, pushing them into informal work. However, within these conditions of precarity and exclusion, forms of gender affirmation and collective resistance emerge (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Roldan, 2025). By insisting in their identity and weaving new forms of community, the *Mariposas del Café* insist on existing and resisting from within – and against – the marginalisation that is imposed upon them (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

THE CONTEXT OF TRANSGENDER MARGINALISATION IN COLOMBIA

TRANSGENDER LIVES IN COLOMBIA

For most of the 20th century, trans experiences in Colombia were silenced or erased by a traditional and religious society that did not even have the language to resist the sexual and gendered violence (Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes, 2021). It was only by the end of the 80s that the word "trans" started being used more frequently (2021). The arrival of HIV to the country fuelled the social prejudice against trans people, especially towards those that engaged in sex work, reinforcing their stigmatization (Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes, 2021). The Penal Code, that penalised homosexual sexual relations until 1980, contributed to institutional transphobia. According to Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes (2021), the history of annihilation through violence of trans lives has been a key driver in the consolidation of trans social movements in the country.

Today, trans people continue to face systemic exclusion that deeply limits their life possibilities. From a young age, many of whom express a non-conforming gender or identity are kicked out of their homes, marking also their exclusion from educational systems and formal employment (Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes, 2021; Roldan, 2025). In Bogotá, 98% of surveyed trans women reported having experienced discrimination or violation of their rights (Correa Quintero, 2017). This situation pushes many of them into sex work as a survival strategy, perpetuating cycles of exclusion, violence, and precarity (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, between 1993 and 2020, 449 homicides of transgender individuals were registered in Colombia, the real number being way higher (Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes, 2021). In 2023, there were 159 documented homicides of LGBTIQ+ people, being trans women one of the most affected groups (Colombia Diversa, 2022).

Despite some significant legal advancements like Decree 1227 of 2015 about self- determination of gender identity, there is a wide gap between legal recognition and lived realities (Roldan, 2025). Conservative and religious sectors mobilise narratives against "gender ideology" to oppose the development of comprehensive laws and the implementation of effective public policy (Roldan, 2025). This opposition encounters systematic practices of State violence. The National Police, the Immediate Attention Commands (CAIs), and police stations have been frequently identified as sites of physical, verbal, and sexual aggression against trans people (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014; Colombia Diversa, 2022). Furthermore, many hate crimes continue to be dismissed or misclassified (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014). The lack of official data and of analytical categorisations such as "violence by prejudice" contributes to their invisibilisation (Colombia Diversa, 2022). Thus, trans exclusion is not just social and economic, but also structural and state led.

THE EMBERA CONTEXT: INDIGENOUS TRANS LIVES

The Embera are an indigenous people present in Colombia, Panamá, and Ecuador that encompasses four subgroups, including the Embera Chamí and Embera Katío (Luna Eslava, 2024). In Colombia, they concentrate in departments such as Risaralda,

Chocó, Antioquia, and Valle del Cauca, often due to forced displacement and conflict (Luna Eslava, 2024). Their culture is based on the Law of Origin, which dictates principles of life, territory, rituals and social organisation (Luna Eslava, 2024). Within these communities, Embera trans women face profound tensions between their gender non- conformity and traditional communal norms (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

Their gender non-conformity is perceived as a rupture with the cultural order, provoking rejection from the indigenous authorities and family members (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). This pressure ends up with them having to leave or being forcibly expulsed from their *resguardos* (indigenous territories) and entering more urban settings, where they face new forms of marginalisation. Many are forced to enter informal or precarious labour arrangements to survive, exposed to violence, discrimination, and poverty (Ritterbusch, 2016; Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

Embera trans women face an intersectional violence that combines transphobia, racialisation, and displacement. Within their indigenous communities, defying the binary gender norms is perceived as a betrayal to indigenous identity, and they are called "*wëra fa*" (false women), which symbolically excludes them from being recognised as women (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Furthermore, when they migrate their feminised and indigenous bodies are object of multiple violences. They not only face invisbilisation within white-mestizo trans frameworks, but also the imposition of western categories that disregard their own ways of understanding gender (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). This imposition is part of a broader pattern of "sexualisation of race", by which feminised and indigenous bodies are shaped from colonial codes that simultaneously racialise, sexualise, and discipline them, deepening their exclusion (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

This chain of exclusion is perpetuated within the state sphere. Accessing land restitution or policies of reparation for indigenous peoples demands the adequation to cisheteronormative norms that deny these women's trajectories (Arboleda Mutis Catrileo, 2022). "If rural (cis) women find themselves in such a degree of marginalisation and inequality, what is left for trans women, who are not even conceived within the reformist worldview of reparation and land policies?" (Arboleda Mutis Catrileo, 2022, p. 272, [own translation]). Despite all of this, Embera trans women build resistance strategies through ancestral art, weaving, and networks of care that challenge both community patriarchy and the state (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

PRECARIOUS LABOUR AND TRANS WOMEN: THE CASE OF SEX WORK

SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION, BARRIERS TO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT, AND CAPITALIST INCORPORATION

The structural violence faced by trans women in Colombia – fuelled by transphobia, racism, machismo and the lack of inclusive labour policies – severely limits their access to formal and stable employment. From an early age, many of them are expelled from their homes for expressing non-normative gender identities or expressions, which interrupts their educational trajectories and undermines their future employment opportunities (Lozano Beltrán, 2020; Roldan, 2025). As a consequence, they are compelled into informal economies where sex work becomes, in many cases, the only viable survival option (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Ritterbusch, 2016).

This structural marginalisation produces what some authors call "transsexualised jobs": labour spaces that absorb trans women – such as hairstyling or sex work – where conditions of precarity, informality, violence, and lack of labour rights persist (Correa Quintero, 2017; Verástegui-Mejía and Palomino Céspedes, 2021; Roldan, 2025). Although some gain access to state contracts through diversity quotas, these are often symbolic, unstable or poorly paid, prioritising their identity over their professional capabilities (Roldan, 2025).

Sex work should not be understood as inherently "bad" or even exploitative; its exploitation comes from the material conditions that surround it: criminalisation, stigma, police violence, and lack of legal protection (Correa Quintero, 2017; Smith and Mac, 2018; Sánchez-Fuentes, Parra-Barrera and Moyano, 2021). Many trans women consider it a rational survival strategy in a context in which other economic options are closed to them (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Orchard *et al.*, 2020). The lack of regulation exacerbates risks of violence, extorsion, and abuse without access to justice or basic services (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014).

In that sense, sex work is not situated outside capitalism, but it is part of its most deregulated and disposable circuits (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Capitalism – including racial capitalism – benefits from popular transphobia and social exclusion, keeping these populations as a hyper-

vulnerable labour force (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Their exclusion from the reproductive family nucleus – key for resource distribution – intensifies their vulnerability, forcing them to rely on informal economies to survive (Gagliano and Liebman, 2024).

Thus, sex work cannot be understood only as a matter of free or identity-based choice, but in many cases, it responds to a context of systematic exclusions – educational, labour-related, familial, and state-driven – that structure their precarity and limit their alternatives.

DISPLACEMENT AND RACIALISED MARGINALISATION

Sex work for trans women in Colombia is strongly conditioned by experiences of forced displacement, urban immobility, and criminalisation that answer to racialised and transphobic structural violence. Many trans women are forced to abandon their rural territories and communities of origin due to threats, paramilitary violence, or sanctions from indigenous authorities, which pushes them to migrate to cities like Bogotá seeking for safety, educational and labour-related opportunities, and conditions to affirm their gender identity (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Tabares Giraldo, 2019; El País, 2024). This mobility, however, does not translate in freedom: many face social isolation, language barriers, lack of support networks, and extreme precarity that leads them into survival economies such as sex work (Ritterbusch, 2016).

In the city, this precarity is reproduced through forms of urban immobility. Trans sex workers are confined to very delimited zones, such as the Santa Fe neighbourhood in Bogotá, where they face police harassment, murders, and daily social violences (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014; Correa Quintero, 2017). This forced territorialisation responds to a control device over feminised and racialised bodies that are considered "out of place" (Correa Quintero, 2017; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Roldan, 2025).

Although sex work is not illegal in Colombia, its lack of regulation and institutional protection makes it, in practice, a criminalised and stigmatised activity (Sánchez- Fuentes, Parra-Barrera and Moyano, 2021). Criminalisation intensifies the vulnerability of trans sex workers, who are seen as suspicious subjects and are persecuted because of their gender identity, race, or migration status (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Colombia Diversa, 2022). They face arbitrary detentions, police

violence, and mass expulsions (Smith and Mac, 2018; Colombia Diversa, 2022). In this way, the state actively participates in the production of material and symbolic violence, denying them recognition as citizens or legitimate workers, and deepening their economic marginalisation. This must be understood from an intersectional perspective that considers transphobia, racism, and labour precarity. The exclusion of trans women from formal labour is not just a result of individual prejudice, but the structural consequence of an economic model that produces and manages disposable populations to sustain its informal circuits of exploitation (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021).

SEX WORK AS A SITE OF AFFIRMATION AND RESISTANCE

Although many trans women enter sex work as a survival strategy against unemployment, exclusion from housing, and violence, this practice can also become an space of affirmation and agency (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Orchard *et al.*, 2020). In Colombia, their arrival to cities like Bogotá due to processes of forced displacement often compels them into feminised labour such as prostitution, one of the few viable economic options given the structural exclusion from the labour market (Ritterbusch, 2016; Smith and Mac, 2018). In this context, sex work allows them to generate income for gender affirming processes, such as hormonal treatment or surgeries, and to build solidarity networks to fight isolation (Orchard *et al.*, 2020).

Far from being just a "forced decision", some women see sex work as an strategic and dignified election, even with aspirations to formalise their work and pay taxes (Orchard *et al.*, 2020). From a Transgender Marxism perspective, sex work makes visible the material conditions that shape non-normative bodies and desires, as well as the collective forms of social reproduction that sustain trans lives (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021).

Likewise, sex worker movements have promoted concrete labour demands: decriminalisation, protections against police violence, and real economic alternatives (Smith and Mac, 2018). These struggles are articulated through critique of criminalisation and moralism, and affirm the right to dignified conditions for those who choose this form of livelihood (Smith and Mac, 2018). As Smith and Mac (2018) put it, naming sex work as work is the first step to demand rights and dignity,

which does not mean denying the exploitation that many live: “When sex workers assert that sex work is work, we are saying that we need rights. We are not saying that work is good or fun, or even harmless, nor that it has fundamental value” (2018, p. 52, [own translation]). Sex work, then, is also a space of resistance where gender norms are challenged and struggling subjectivities are constructed.

PRECARIOUS RURAL LABOUR: THE CASE OF EMBERA TRANS WOMEN

TRANSPHOBIA AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION IN RURAL CONTEXTS

The structural violence and exclusion that Embera trans women face manifests from family circles to community and rural labour structures, limiting their access to education, health, housing, and dignified employment (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Tabares Giraldo, 2019). By challenging binary gender norms within their communities, many are socially sanctioned, excluded, or forced to leave their *resguardos* (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

This exclusion often begins from within their families. According to Gleeson and O’Rourke (2021), the cisheterosexual family functions as a key unit of social reproduction under capitalism, channelling resources, care, and recognition. When trans women are expelled from their homes, they are deprived of access to these structures that make life possible, which severely hinders their social and economic reproduction (Gleeson and O’Rourke, 2021). In the case of Embera trans women, this is reinforced by the rejection from indigenous leaders, who consider their existence a threat to collective identity, intensifying their forced displacement (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

The dispossession and forced displacement that many rural trans women face leads them to migrate to cities in search of security, gender affirmation, and educational and labour-related opportunities (Ritterbusch, 2016; El País, 2024). Nevertheless, this movement does not guarantee inclusion: they often arrive with no support networks, face new forms of discrimination, and are confined into stigmatised areas (Ritterbusch, 2016). Migration becomes a survival strategy deeply shaped by gender, indigeneity, and displacement (Lozano Beltrán, 2020).

Just as it happens with trans women that are pushed into sex work (see section 3), Embera trans women are channelled into informal, poorly paid, and feminised rural employment due to a lack of alternatives (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). It is not as simple as a free choice, but an insertion forced by systemic exclusion under racialised and cisnormative capitalism. The lack of dignified alternatives and the need to survive lead many to work in multiple agricultural or service jobs, where they are exposed to exploitation and violence (Tabares Giraldo, 2019; Roldan, 2025). These parallels between sex work and rural precarious work reflect how labour trajectories of trans women are determined by a social structure that denies their recognition, limits their mobility, and pushes them to the margins of production (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021).

CAPITALIST ABSORPTION AND CONDITIONAL INCLUSION

Embera trans women are selectively incorporated to seasonal agricultural work such as coffee harvesting in municipalities like Santuario in Risaralda (Millán Valencia, 2019; Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Their participation does not represent full inclusion, but rather a precarious absorption within a "hetero-colonial" hierarchy that codes their existence as racialised, feminised, and surplus (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Just as in the case of trans women in sex work (see section 3), their incorporation into labour is characterised by informality, disposability, and marginalisation (Lozano Beltrán, 2020; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). The employment in coffee farms is temporary, poorly paid, and lacks social security benefits (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Some Embera trans women share that employers take advantage of the language barrier to deny them fair payment: "Because they don't speak Spanish, what happens is that they don't get paid what they should..." (Tabares Giraldo, 2019, p. 55, [translation by author]). Their bodies are simultaneously rejected and desired, sexualised by male workers (*kapunías*), and exploited as cheap labour force (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). This condition reinforces what Transgender Marxism identifies as capitalism's willingness to codify and exploit difference for productive ends (Gagliano and Liebman, 2024).

Both in the coffee farms and in sex work, trans women face physical, psychological, and sexual violence, mocking, and their work is seen as disposable. This devaluation is sustained by popular transphobia and machismo that feeds flexible and feminised exploitation structures (Smith and

Mac, 2018; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Their situation evidences that racial and cisheteronormative capitalism absorbs trans and racialised identities under conditional conditions: those that allow the extraction of their labour without guaranteeing rights or recognition (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Thus, their precarity is not incidental, but a structural condition of their subordinate inclusion.

GENDER AFFIRMATION AS RESISTANCE IN AGRICULTURAL WORK

For trans women, to inhabit cisnormative workspaces means a constant embodied struggle (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Work is not just an economic necessity, but also a site in which their identities are disciplined or denied (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). In rural contexts like the coffee farms of Santuario, these conditions deepen because of racist, patriarchal, and cisnormative dynamics of agricultural work. Nevertheless, their presence in these spaces represents a form of embodied resistance: asserting themselves as trans, indigenous, and working women within territories and forms of labour that have historically excluded them (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

Embera trans women or M*ariposas del Café*, challenge the traditional Embera model of femininity, which is often associated with life cycles, community responsibilities, and normative forms of kinship (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). Unlike cis Embera women, the M*ariposas del Café* participate in coffee harvesting, a historically masculinised job, which not only subverts traditional gender roles, but reconfigures their place in the rural labour structure (Tabares Giraldo, 2019).

In the face of family and community exclusion, and state denial, these women build mutual support networks and alternative forms of community and kinship (Tabares Giraldo, 2019). As mentioned earlier (see section 4a), the heterosexual family is a central circuit for social reproduction within capitalism, and the expulsion of trans people from these spaces limits their access to care, resources, and the reproductive work necessary to survive (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). The creation of "chosen families" and community networks among racialised trans women becomes a practice of collective social reproduction and material resistance (Tabares Giraldo, 2019; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021).

For the Mariposas del Café, the action of weaving does not only have a symbolic value, but also political: “what we weave when we all sit here is the community” (Tabares Giraldo, 2019, p. 109, [my translation]). This practice re-signifies their place in the territory, asserts their existence as women and indigenous, and creates sites of belonging, care, and resistance in face of the multiple forms of exclusion they face.

CISNORMATIVE CAPITALISM AND TRANSGENDER VULNERABILITY

HOW VULNERABILITY IS LEVERAGED

The vulnerability of trans people is not an essential trait, but a condition actively produced by racial and cisnormative capitalism, that exploits non-normative bodies by placing them in situations of structural precarity and channelling them towards marginalised jobs such as sex work or beauty services (Lozano Beltrán, 2020; Moncayo Quevedo, Pérez-Arizabaleta and Reyes Sevillano, 2022). This logic of exploitation is characterised by a systemic discrimination that extends from family exclusion to unequal access to education, health, and formal employment (Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014; Correa Quintero, 2017).

The failure of the state to guarantee fundamental rights contributes to this precarisation (Lozano Beltrán, 2020). In the face of this exclusion from the formal labour markets, many trans women see sex work as the only viable option for subsistence (Bianchi *et al.*, 2014; Nadal, Davidoff and Fujii-Doe, 2014). Although this work can offer forms of gender affirmation, it is deeply conditioned by economic necessity and entails high risks (Orchard *et al.*, 2020).

According to Gleeson and O’Rourke (2021) and Gagliano and Liebman (2024), Transgender Marxism sees the capitalist system as reliant on the regulation of gender and sexuality, which is needed for social reproduction. The legitimate body in the workplace is assumed to be cisgender, generating forms of “differentiated inclusion” in occupations that reinforce their marginality (Roldan, 2025, p. 41). Moreover, “The Beauty-Employability Nexus” prioritises trans women who are closer to cisnormative ideals (Roldan, 2025, p. 88).

Racialised capitalism transforms feminised and racialised bodies into sites of surplus value extraction, and generates surplus populations whose existence is managed through vigilance, exclusion or stigmatised jobs (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). In this context, trans existence is in itself a survival tactic and an act of resistance (Gagliano and Liebman, 2024).

GENDER AFFIRMATION AS A POLITICAL ACT

Gender affirmation, let it be social or medical, is a form of self-affirmation and political resistance in the face of an structure that seeks to discipline bodies (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). According to Gleeson and O'Rourke (2021), to transition is to assert one's own terms of existence, challenging the binary assignment of gender and renegotiating one's place in the world. This process frequently occurs within adverse conditions and it is sustained by collective support networks, mutual care, and shared knowledges among trans communities (Roldan, 2025). Mutual support networks and chosen families make it possible to confront structural exclusion and to build sites to inhabit (Roldan, 2025).

Challenging the gender binary interrupts capitalist modes of social reproduction, questioning the economic order that is sustained by the sexual division of labour (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). Transfeminism and Transgender Marxism perspectives insist that trans struggles can not be limited to legal recognition, but they must point towards the structural transformation of society (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Gagliano and Liebman, 2024). From these perspectives, the struggle for sexual liberation is deeply connected with class struggles, recognising in trans and queer workers a key force to imagine radical change (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Arboleda Mutis Catrileo, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Whether through sex work or seasonal rural labour, the incorporation of trans women into the labour market happens under conditions that strip them from rights, recognition, and stability (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021; Roldan, 2025). This marginalisation is not incidental, but a

structural condition of their subordinate inclusion. As shown by the case of the Mariposas del Café, forced migration, family and community rejection, and the lack of education and employment opportunities constitute a chain of violence shaped by gender, race, ethnicity, and class (Tabares Giraldo, 2019; Lozano Beltrán, 2020).

Despite this, within these sites of exclusion, practices of resistance emerge. The affirmation of their identities, the creation of care and support networks, and the reconstruction of forms of community are acts that challenge both the indigenous patriarchy and the state and capitalist logic (Tabares Giraldo, 2019; Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021). As Gleeson and O'Rourke (2021) note, transitioning is not just an individual process, but a collective affirmation of existence in a world that insists in denying them place. From there, the M*ariposas del Café* insist, exist, and resist.

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ESSAY 3: BREAKING THE WHEEL: COMBATTING GBV IN SOUTH AFRICAN MINIBUS TAXIS

By Ruben Elischer. SPD. Germany.

POLICY AUDIENCE

This policy brief and the proposed intervention are targeted at The Department of Transport, South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO), The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in partnership with relevant private and civil actors (Trade Unions, NGOs, Financial institutions, etc.)

CONTEXTUALIZING THE PROBLEM: WHY DO WE NEED AN INTERVENTION?

Transport is a major part of everyday life, determining people's access to critical resources such as employment, education or healthcare. In South Africa the minibus taxi industry (MTI) is a significant provider of both employment and transport. Referred to as "the backbone of South Africa's public transportation sector" it accounts for millions of daily transport trips and connects crucial economic sectors (Ndlovu, 2025, para. 4). Critically, this sector enables workforce participation, providing an accessible and relatively affordable mode of transport which connects remote areas and communities with areas of employment. As of 2017, it was reported that more than 200,000 minibus taxis were in operation across South Africa (Vegter, 2020, p.17). Importantly, minibus taxis are "owned and operated by taxi operators, who hire taxi drivers or drive themselves", with all taxi operators being required to either create or join a taxi association (TaxiMap, n.d.).

Despite its national economic importance, the MTI is unfortunately a male-dominated sector plagued by a high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) against both female drivers and commuters. GBV as explained by UN Women (2024, para. 4) can be understood as physical, psychological or sexual violence against a woman on the basis that she is a woman, or that disproportionately impacts women. Notably, according to a survey undertaken by ActionAid South Africa it was estimated that more than half of women using minibus taxis have faced harassment or violence, whilst "69% said they have witnessed it" (ActionAid South Africa cited in Moeti, 2017, para. 5). Entrenched hyper masculine norms have defined the sector as a "male-space" with taxi driving being a "man's job", with less than 2% of employees being women (Nkete, 2014, p.14). Gender-based violence is of critical concern for the South African government, as it has far-reaching and detrimental consequences for a variety of actors. On an individual level, GBV is a basic violation of women's rights, with serious implications for victims' reproductive, psychological and physical wellbeing. On a sociocultural level it can destroy communities, families and social life (UNFPA, 2025, para. 4). Finally, without taking away from the significant

individual impact it can economically disrupt businesses and the national economy, by increasing worker absenteeism, lowering morale and productivity (Agbaje et al., 2021, p.2). Significantly, the prevalence of GBV in the MTI has had significant and detrimental impacts on female participation in the labour market and their access to vital resources including healthcare, education, amongst others (Moeti, 2017, para. 7).

DRIVERS OF GBV IN THE MTI

In order to understand the system in which this policy problem is situated, it is important to reflect on the drivers of GBV in the MTI. In South Africa's MTI the existing hyper masculine norms reflect a blend of historical, economic and cultural factors. Historically, developing as a relatively informal industry, its competitive, unregulated and sometimes violent nature has favoured traditional notions of masculinity such as dominance and physical assertiveness. Significantly, these persisting hyper masculine norms were both shaped and produced through the oppression of black hegemonic masculinities during the apartheid period. Racial and gendered hierarchies prevented black men from achieving an "ideal hegemonic masculinity" which was primarily reserved for white men. In the postcolonial period, black men were able to attain an idealised "hegemonic masculine gender identity of prestige, power and dominance" through wage labour (Kalemba, 2019, p.652). Hence, in a society where there is significant unemployment within the black male population (Kalemba, 2019, p.652), the participation of women in a male-dominated space like the MTI might be viewed as a threat to male breadwinner status. Moreover, economic imbalances such as male control over most taxi ownership, and limited financial independence for women has reinforced entry barriers and patriarchal attitudes. Equally important, using Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) framework of intersectionality we can recognise that GBV in the South African MTI does not impact all women equally, but disproportionately burdens black women (specifically from the working class), due to the historical legacies of racial capitalism which shaped the industry. Created as a response to racial segregation, the MTI was developed as a way for the black working-class to engage with work (Barrett, 2003), and continues to be an environment in which black women face intersecting forms of oppression based on gender, class and race. Significantly, the incidences of GBV are much higher amongst black communities in South Africa and most severely impact Black women (Zungu et al., 2024).

POLICY INTERVENTION

This policy brief suggests a two-pronged policy intervention:

1. Formalization of MTI through compulsory registration and obtaining a license which involves meeting the criteria of the following policy instruments:

2. Drivers must undergo and/or enrol in a government-led gender-sensitivity training program as well as a criminal background check before obtaining an operating license.

3. Drivers are required to wear mandatory uniforms and have identification badges on them during all work hours. Additionally, minibus taxis must have a sticker with the name and contact of their taxi operator.

4. Taxi operators are required to provide an accessible and confidential reporting mechanism and are required to tackle reports in a timely and efficient manner.

5. Taxi operators must have an operating security camera within all of their minibus taxis to ensure female drivers are protected from commuters, all footage must be kept for a minimum of 6 months to ensure complaints can be filed. Taxi operators are legally required to report incidences of GBV to the relevant authorities, and must support investigations with video footage if requested.

6. Require taxi operators and associations to introduce anti-GBV policies with clear non-compliance penalties including suspension, fines and police involvement depending on the nature of the incidence

7. Investing in empowerment and awareness

8. Providing grants and subsidies for women to obtain taxi ownership and incentivise female-led taxi entrepreneurship.

9. Partnerships between the government and local civil society groups can challenge hyper masculine norms and advocate for anti-GBV initiatives within the industry.

10. Investing in a campaign which promotes awareness and respect for female drivers, as well as placing anti-harassment messaging at taxi-ranks or within taxis.

EFFECTIVENESS IN IMPROVING GENDER JUSTICE

To assess the effectiveness of our policy intervention, we can apply Nancy Fraser's framework on gender justice which reflects on gender through a "two-dimensional" framework of recognition and re/distribution. To summarise, Fraser defines distribution as the economic underpinning of gender inequality pinned in the breakup of economic establishments and labour, whilst recognition focuses on the cultural dimensions such as institutional forms of gender subordination, androcentric viewpoints, and socioeconomic hierarchies (Fraser, 2007, p.25-26).

RECOGNITION: TACKLING HYPER MASCULINE NORMS

Recognizing the androcentric norms which produce GBV in the South African MTI is crucial in designing an effective intervention. The policy intervention is designed to challenge and reshape the male-dominated nature of the industry through gender-sensitization programs, mandatory uniforms, identification, reporting systems and anti-GBV protocols.

Gender-sensitivity training:

11. Through gender-sensitivity training, this intervention aims to change the cultural attitudes which have normalised GBV in the MTI.

12. By directly challenging androcentric value patterns, the policy challenges gendered workplace hierarchies, patterns of GBV and institutional gender discrimination.

Identification, uniforms and security cameras:

13. The introduction of mandatory uniforms and identification badges aims to increase the accountability of taxi drivers to their colleagues and passengers. This will hopefully enable victims to identify perpetrators. Notably, the risk of identity badges making female drivers more vulnerable (commuters being able to see their names on badges) needs to be considered and could potentially be mitigated through identification numbers instead of names.

14. Moreover, mandating taxi operators to have operating video cameras in all minibus taxis will ensure female drivers are equally protected from male commuters.

Reporting systems and anti-GBV measures:

15. By creating strong protocols and efficient mechanisms in GBV reporting, victims can feel more empowered in the justice-seeking process, whilst it also reflects an institutional commitment to addressing GBV.

16. Notably this policy instrument implements dimensions of recognition (by recognising the experiences of women) and redistribution (by providing greater access to justice mechanisms).

17. Additionally, it has the potential to increase women's bargaining power within their companies by ensuring that perpetrators are accountable to non-compliance policies.

Redistribution: Economic Power and Inequalities

18. Subsidizing female taxi-ownership:

19. In order to change the dominance of male taxi ownership, government departments can subsidize and support more female entrepreneurs in owning taxis, increasing women's economic power within the industry.

20. This policy instrument could contribute to less economic dependence for women on male taxi operators and make the industry safer and more inclusive (ideally female taxi-ownership could facilitate less tolerance of GBV).

Government and Civil Society Partnerships:

21. By developing partnerships between government departments and civil society organisations, programs and events targeting the hypermasculine culture in the MTI industry could be organised. This would contribute to cultural change which would increase recognition as well as having redistributive impacts such as building more equitable and just opportunities for women across the sector.

22. Significantly, this could also produce greater coalitional and discursive power by bringing together important different actors and aligning their policy objectives.

Potential Limitations:

23. Changing cultural norms can be a slow process and may face significant resistance from male-dominated institutional structures.

24. Without comprehensive enforcement and clear non-compliance penalties, the policy intervention risks becoming an insignificant and symbolic policy.

FEASIBILITY OF POLICY INTERVENTION

The feasibility of the proposed policy intervention depends on three main factors including financial resources, institutional capacities and stakeholder approval. In order to implement a mandatory registration scheme that includes the outlined policy instruments, the South African government will need to invest significant financial resources. Whilst introducing gender-sensitivity training, uniforms and identification badges should induce relatively low costs, the broader development of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance may be costly. However, if there is enough political will to prioritise this intervention, the financial cost should be easily overcome. Countries with relatively smaller GDPs (South Africa with a GDP of 403 billion USD) like Kenya (116 billion USD) and Rwanda (13.6 billion USD) have managed to introduce similar schemes (International Monetary Fund, 2025). In Kenya, the introduction of the "Michuki Rules" mandated drivers to wear prescribed uniforms and provide their identification on the vehicle (Habyarimana and Jack, 2012, p.3). In Rwanda, the government mandated all motorcycle taxi drivers (which operates in a similar informal fashion to the MTI) to be registered and introduced background checks (Martin et al., 2023). On an institutional level, the policy would require strong collaboration between MTI actors, and equally strong enforcement and implementation by government departments. South Africa has the available institutional capacity to implement such a policy, with clear departments and protocols, however, I think the determining

factor would be the political will and their priorities. Potentially the most challenging factor would be the social and stakeholder approval. An industry with deeply embedded hypermasculine norms may put up significant resistance. Yet, South Africa has already demonstrated its commitment to tackling GBV with new legislations being introduced every year. Therefore, with a gradual implementation plan and strong institutional support this hurdle should be manageable.

CONCLUSION

Addressing GBV in the South African MTI is clearly a priority in terms of gender justice and economic development. It is clear that the proposed two-pronged policy intervention addresses gender justice through both redistribution and recognition, ensuring that female drivers and commuters can safely and equitably participate in the workplace. By changing hypermasculine norms, improving protective infrastructure at work, and holding perpetrators accountable, this policy intervention has the potential to reshape the MTI. The comparative case studies (Rwanda and Kenya) reflect South Africa's ability to implement this policy financially, institutionally and socially. The addressed government departments and relevant stakeholders are urged to engage with this policy intervention as an effective way to tackle GBV and promote gender justice in the MTI.

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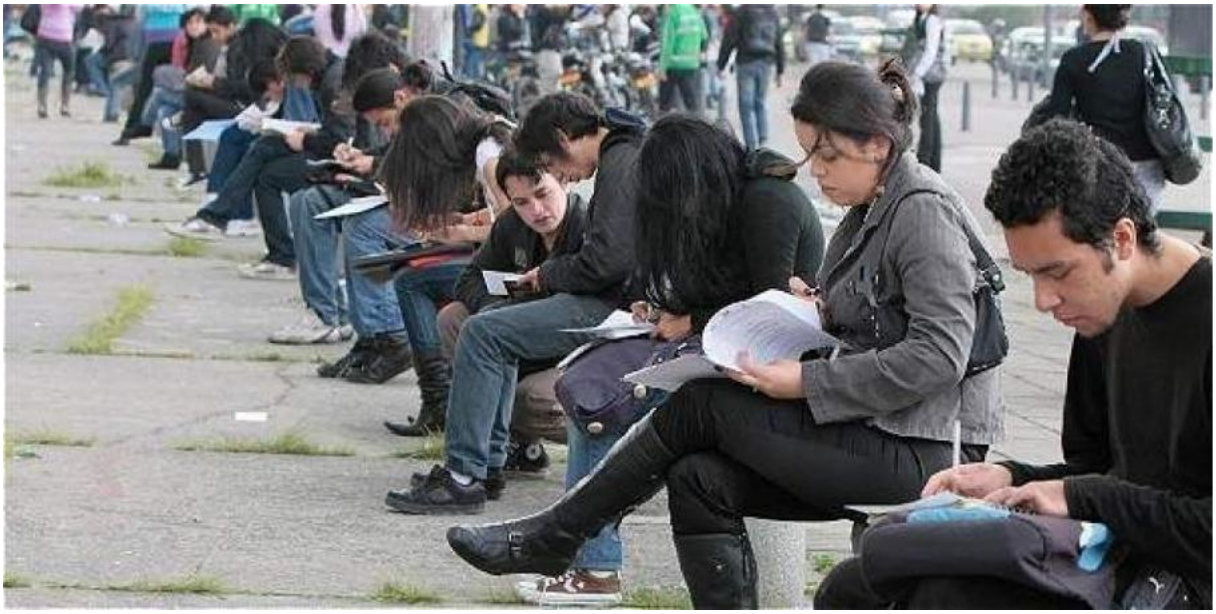
ESSAY 4: BEING NEAT WITH NEET

By *Andres Guzman Botero*. Mundus MAPP. Colombia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colombia faces an imminent challenge: 28.6% of population between 15 and 28 years are *Neither in Employment nor in Education and Training* (NEET)[4], making Colombia one of the top 10 countries with more youth unemployment in the world (OyNtv, 2022). Although recent efforts from the Education and Labour ministries have attempted to provide more opportunities for young people, the size of NEET population has increased unevenly in the last 5 years in almost half a million, affecting specially women, ethnic and low-income groups.

This policy report provides a systemic, logical and critical analysis of the causes, interconnections and potential policy alternatives to tackle the problematic of young NEET population and evaluates them on a multicriteria basis. This includes the identification of the key stakeholders and the institutional setting that shapes their incentives, the logical framework that defines the expected outcomes, and its complexities and possible uncertainties. As a recommendation, the development of a coupling programme between private sector and education institutions will be justified as the more integral and *neat* NEET policy for Colombia to be considered by education and labour authorities.



[4] [1] Own calculation based on Great Household Integrated Survey (GEIH)- National Statistics Office, Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, 2019; 2024).

Picture 1. Job search in youth population in Colombia. Source: OyNtv (2022).

WHY IS IT CRUCIAL TO TAKE ACTION… NOW?

Young population is a fundamental part of the development of a country. A productive and educated youth can cement the conditions for having a wealthy and fructiferous environment by the contribution to value activities and to a more civilized society. In contrast, not attending the lack of opportunities for young population can represent a risk for the economic prosperity, and the social cohesion and welfare.

In Colombia since the last 5 years almost 1 of every 3 young person is not studying nor working (NEET), and this affects mostly to women, ethnic and poor people. As a trend that is occurring in both developing and developed countries, the NEET condition posits several challenges and opportunities in a country like Colombia. With more than 11 million people between the ages of 15 and 28 in 2024, more than 3 million do not have a occupation as a worker or student, and would mostly be unemployed or would be dedicated to household chores, in the case of most women. Similarly, given an inequal socioeconomic society, the persistence of NEET situation tends to affect more people in lower income quintiles and of vulnerable groups, like ethnic, racial and indigenous.

Colombia's demographic, violence and inequality context is challenging for young NEET and gives it particular importance. Several conditions make the NEET problematic a relevant aspect to address by current policy-making:

25. The country faces a demographic bond that constitutes and opportunity for today's population, and a risk of having an increasing dependent population in the future without material conditions to satisfy its needs.
26. Studies have shown an existing relationship between the lack of opportunities in young population and the risk of participating in illegal and violent activities, which is a structural situation of Colombia, one of the most affected societies because of violence and crime.
27. Tackling the NEET challenge is also a condition for building a more equal society in Colombia (one of most inequal countries in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 54.8). Providing labour and educational opportunities for vulnerable people is also a way of addressing structural inequalities and promoting conditions for having a higher social mobility.

The policy problem that guides this policy brief is then the *socioeconomic vulnerability in young people that are NEET*, and target indicators include the reduction of NEET rate in the short, medium and long term, and a greater coordination across education, labour and social policy sectors.

Previous efforts to address NEET youth have been ineffective and have got a limited interconnected scope. The government of Colombia have had different programs for promoting labour and education opportunities to young population, ranging from demand-side subsidies programs in both local and national level (like *Ser Pilo Paga, Jóvenes a la U*) that have not focused on the job creation, limited offer-side investments to provide public education (one of lowest public spending per student in the Latin American region), conditioned cash transfers (*Jóvenes en Acción*) or incentives programs for young job creation with limited deployment and connection (*Sacúdete*).

A holistic understanding analysis of NEET problematic is required to develop more sound and targeted policies from the education authorities in Colombia. The ineffectiveness of previous policies to tackle young NEET shows a simpler, disconnected and limited analysis to a complex problematic, and also gives the opportunity to develop a more systemic and logical one to understand the causes, interconnections and the outcomes of potential alternatives to reduce NEET rates, giving priority to vulnerable groups.

A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE: UNDERLYING CAUSES AND FEEDBACK LOOPS IN THE PROBLEM OF YOUNG NEET POPULATION

The occurrence of NEET youth, or the lack of economic and educative opportunities, is related with multiple intermediate and root multidimensional causes in the economic, educational and social sectors. As is shown in the following graph, the vulnerability generated by NEET population could be mainly related with structural deficiencies in labour markets that obstacles job creation, an outdated and ineffective education system that do not considers the relevance of providing relevant skills that are required in the market, the existence of care responsibilities and gender stereotypes, the lack of a welfare network that can provide attention for vulnerable and disadvantageous populations, or even the deficient support for the conformation of entrepreneurship projects in youth population.

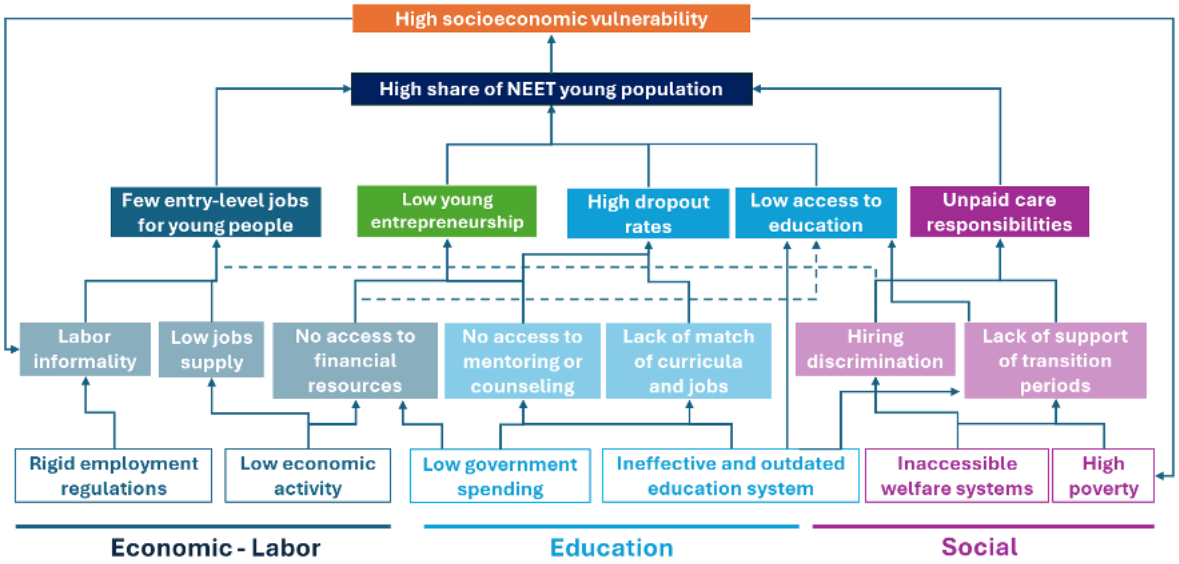


Figure 1. Problem tree – NEET Youth Population. Source: author's own elaboration.

The identification of the logical connections among different dimensions and the NEET problematic shows relevant feedback loops. As the previous graph shows, the high vulnerability that generates the increasing share of NEET young population reinforces part of the causes of the problematic by generating a positive feedback on higher poverty and higher informality, which on each case contribute to higher lack of educative and employment opportunities.

From the perspective of the national educational policy, the intermediate and root causes reveal different stakeholders and different incentives set by the institutional setting. This identification is useful to understand what are the different behaviors and conditions that can be part of the range of action of the policy alternatives. The next table presents the different groups of stakeholders.

Ministry of Education/National Government	Municipalities and Local Governments	Public and Private Educational Institutions
28. Improve education to lower poverty and unemployment 29. Increase wellbeing in young population 30. Show the effectiveness of	32. Improve the infrastructure for education delivery 33. Align training and education with the demands of the local labour market.	35. Enrollment, sustainability, and secure finances 36. Improve employability and graduation rates for students 37. Adjust curriculum to

public policies and governance. 31. Achieve development objectives (such as the SDGs and National Plan's objectives).	34. Increase investment by strengthening the foundational skills	meet the needs of the labour market within legal restrictions. 38. Look for both student achievement and reputation.
Teachers and Teachers' Unions:	**Student and Youth Organizations**	**Private Sector / Employers**
39. Guarantee professional growth, work stability, and fair pay. 40. Impact pedagogical standards and curriculum 41. Strive for better resources and conditions for instruction	42. Availability of reliable and high-quality education 43. Taking part in the decision-making process for education 44. Possibilities for vocational skills and entrepreneurship training	45. Having access to a capable and skillful labour force. 46. Lower training expenses through targeted educational programs. 47. Influence curriculum design to ensure relevance.

Table 1. Stakeholders and incentives in NEET policy. Source: author's own elaboration.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In this context, some alternatives of policy intervention would be aimed at changing the incentives and behaviours of both unemployed or uneducated youth, potential employers, and/or education institutions to contribute to the decrease of NEET population.

For logically seeing the definition of policy alternatives, the following graph shows what could potentially change to have a better outcome over the problematic of the NEET population. In this case, one can see how having different causal paths could actually reduce the share of NEET population on basis of the understanding of what it causes in the first case.

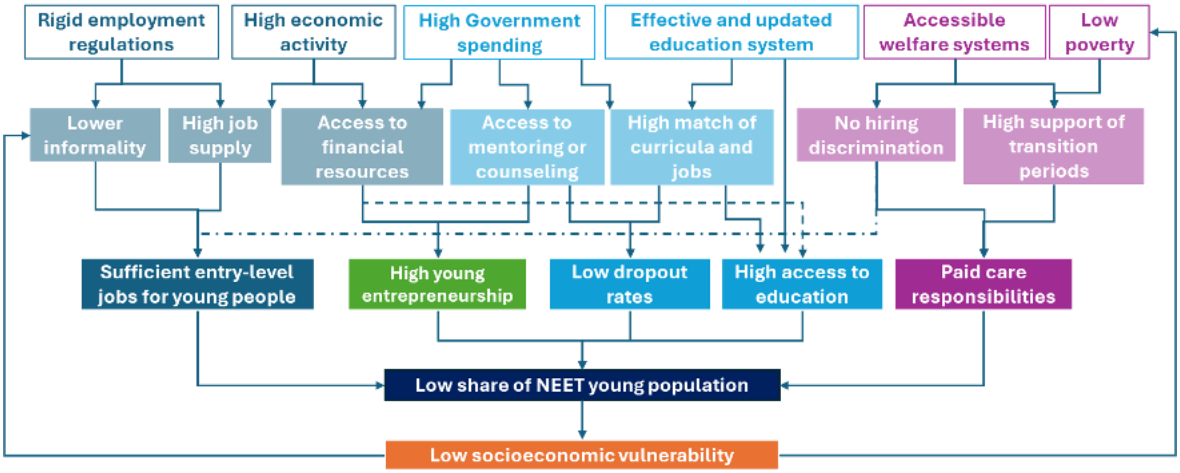


Figure 2. Solution tree – NEET Youth Population. Source: author's own elaboration.

Once identified the multiple potential solutions, given the scope of action of the Education and Labour Ministries four different alternatives are selected to be contrasted and compared, and are shown in the next table with the main policy instruments that could be conceived based on previous experiences and in the benchmark of current recommendations by international organizations.

Alternative 1 *National Access Program to education*	**Alternative 2** *Integral Care + Young women's attention*	**Alternative 3** *Job-School Coupling Initiatives*	**Alternative 4** *Public Employment Information Service*
48. Demand-side subsidies for access 49. Information system for promoting high employability courses 50. Incentives for educational institutions	51. Prevention and education campaigns for women 52. Sanctions for hiring discrimination practices 53. Attention for vulnerable population	54. Matching program of employers and education institutions 55. Tailor-made short-term training programs 56. Fiscal incentive	57. Information platform for employers and employees 58. Investment in digital capacities for potential candidates 59. Monitoring schemes

	s for companies	for market trends

Table 2. Policy Alternatives identification and main instruments. Source: author's own elaboration.

A logical comparison of the expected outcomes and assumptions of the alternatives is useful to contrast them and identify their trade-offs, spillovers and feasibility. In order to understand how these alternatives are expected to have an effect on the problem of unemployment and lack of education in youth population, and also start seeing they distinction in their implementation feasibility, is valuable to use the tool of the Logical framework, where the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts for each one are presented, which is done in the next figure.

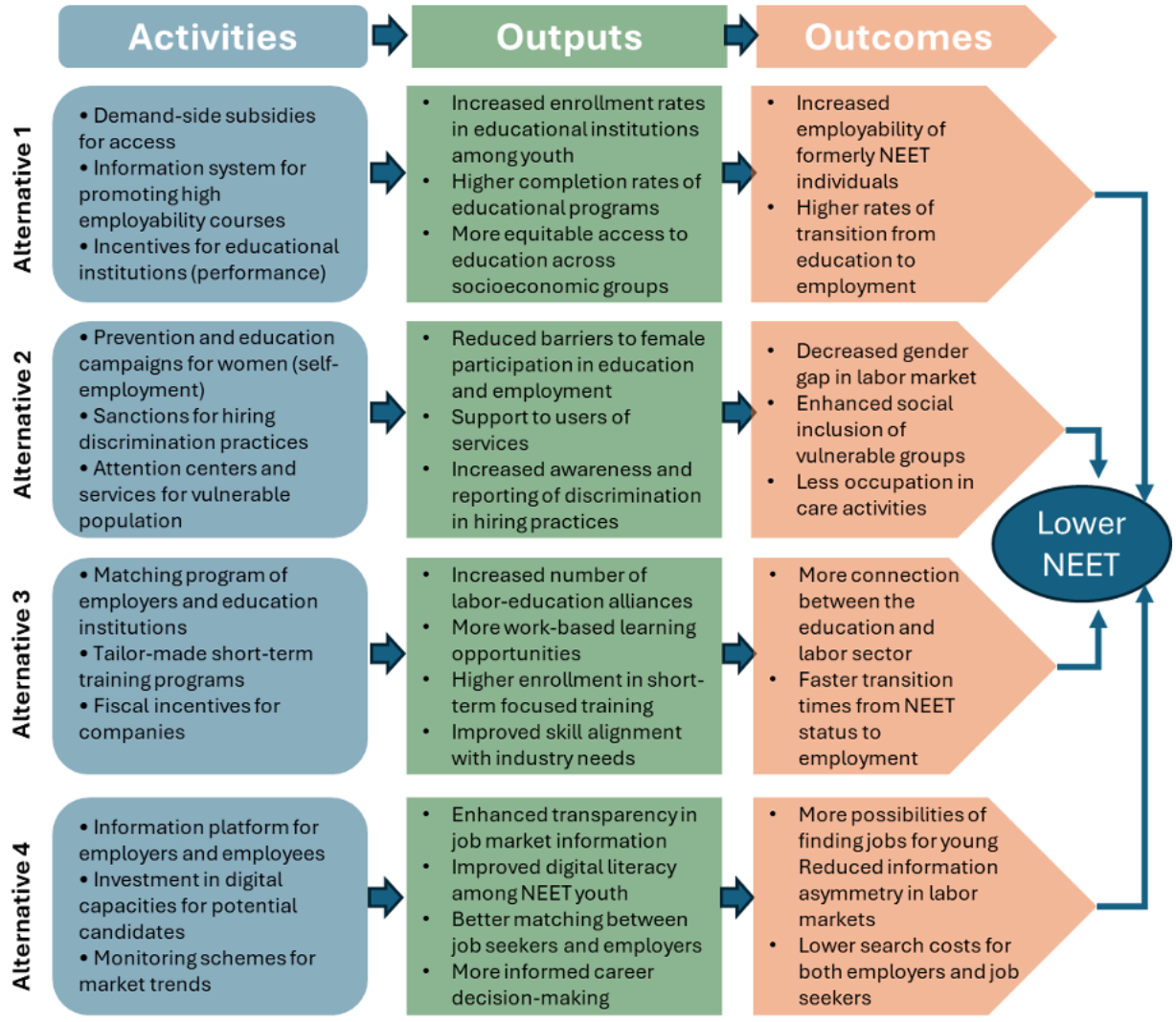


Figure 3. Logical Framework Analysis for the different alternatives. Source: author's own elaboration.

The outcomes of the different alternatives can be affected by certain uncertainties and therefore could consider different degrees of adaptability. Part of the planning process of the policy design is the conception and recognition of uncertain scenarios that can affect the performance and development of the policy. In the case of NEET, as seen in the problem tree, a clear element that could affect is an economic recession that would create a loss of jobs and less resources for investing in education. Similarly, demographic changes due to rising migration from Venezuela and internally due to violence may make the problem a biggest challenge for decision makers and increase the fiscal pressure.

EVALUATING POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Once conceived the potential outputs and outcomes of the alternatives is important to have a logical comparison and evaluation tool for selecting among them, which can be done through a multi-criteria analysis (MCA). This analysis proposes a particular set of criteria and different weights to each one to assess the best alternative for addressing a situation. For the problem of NEET youth the following criteria, relevance and weight are proposed:

60. Criteria 1. Potential reduction of NEET Population (40%). Assesses the anticipated direct effect of the policy on lowering the number of young individuals who are not engaged in employment, education, or training. This criterion holds the highest importance since it reflects the principal aim of any initiative targeting NEET individuals.
61. Criteria 2. Equality (20%). This criteria analyses the degree in which the proposed alternative can generate equitable benefits across different demographic groups, especially to those with a high socioeconomic vulnerability like women, ethnic and indigenous groups. Is the second most important criteria given the fact that Colombia is a society marked by structural inequality, and addressing this aspect can itself have spillover effects as a negative feedback loop on the problematic.
62. Criteria 3. Implementation feasibility (15%). Evaluates the viability of the policy alternative considering the administrative capacity available in the public sector, the resources that will need to be invested for its deployment or operation and the technical knowledge that would be required. Its relevance comes from the fact that the most smart or innovative policies are useless if the implementation restrictions are not considered.
63. Criteria 4. Scalability and Sustainability (15%). Considers the potential of the policy alternative to be augmented in its benefited population, location or scope, given the cost, requirements and other constraining factors, and the extent on which the policy could be maintained in the future without much fiscal pressure, political feasibility and administrative capacity. Given the limited resources available for education and labour policies, this criteria tries to evaluate also in what extent could the alternative generate

resources or added value from mandatory or voluntary contributions to ensure its persistence on time.

64. Criteria 5. Adaptability (10%). This criteria assess the expected capacity of adaptation to changes that the instruments considered for each instrument have. The proposal of the adaptability as a relevant criteria comes from the uncertain and changing environment that affects the performance of education and labour policies, which includes the possibility of change of the economic stability and structure, the change in technologies that would put pressure on the education sector or the change in demographic trends due to external or internal migration.

The following table presents the result of the valuation of alternatives according to each criteria on a scale of 1 to 10 and the overall weighted value. This judgement is based on both the activities or instruments proposed by each alternative and the corresponding outputs and outcomes that have been previously presented and its justified and analysed below.

Alternatives	*Criteria*					Total (100%)
	Potential reduction of NEET Population (40%)	Equality (20%)	Implementation feasibility (15%)	Scalability and Sustainability (15%)	Adaptability (10%)	
1. National Access Program to education	7	6	7	4	5	6.15
2. Integral Care + Young women's attention	6	9	5	6	7	6.55
3. Job-School Coupling Initiatives	8	6	6	7	8	7.15
4. Public Employment Information Service	5	7	8	9	8	6.75

Table 3. Policy Alternatives Evaluation. Source: author's own elaboration.

The evaluation of the alternative based on each criteria can show findings and trade-offs relevant for its comparison and it gives the highest value to the alternative of Job-School Coupling initiatives. This comes from the fact that some alternatives can be highly effective for some criteria

and not for others, given the design of its own characteristics and instruments, and the expected outcomes they have. The following insights justify the more relevant criteria for each alternative and the different trade-offs that can face.

65. Alternative 1 (National Access Program to education), related with the expansion of the educational access through demand-side incentives, represents a direct opportunity for reducing NEET young population and could have a relative high implementation feasibility in the sense that the education ministry has already implemented similar programs in the past. The biggest difficulty of this alternative is the high fiscal pressure that it represents for the government, in the sense that it requires significant and increasing investments from public resources. Another relevant aspect that is being recognized is the limited flexibility that current educational programs have in terms of the legal restrictions to change the content of its courses, which decreases its capacity of adaptation.
66. Alternative 2 (Integral Care + Young women's attention) is the strongest alternative when considering the criteria of equality, given its focus on providing special support for highly vulnerable population in transition between education and employment. In that sense it also gets a high qualification for the adaptability criteria since the instruments can be modified to introduce elements of different affected populations. However, the alternative would face particular difficulties in terms of implementation and scalability since it would require having a constant and reliable social worker network to attend vulnerable population. Even more, for the overall target of reducing the share of young NEET population the alternative could represent a great advantage for some cases but not for the biggest proportion of population given its limited scope.
67. Alternative 3 (Job-School Coupling Initiatives) represents a valuable alternative in the sense that is has the highest potential reduction of NEET young population by connecting both education and labour sectors to provide accessible and useful education programs. Additionally, it has a high adaptability capacity in the sense that it can adapt the content, scope and type of training it can represent, especially in the case of technological shifts and trend changes. In third place, the fact that it rely on the active relationship between employers and education sector its sustainability is more possible than other alternatives, and as long as the economic sector continues being active, the scalability of the program could continue by including more employer organizations. Some of the relative weaknesses of this alternative include the challenge of ensuring a proper implementation and coordination among the education and labour sector, which would require the compromise and the perceived value of both parts. Even more, in terms of equality, the alternative itself could bias the improvement in NEET population if just good candidates are selected, leaving behind vulnerable groups.
68. Alternative 4 (Public Employment Information Service) is an innovative alternative to improve information sharing about the existence of jobs for young candidates. In this

case, implementation, scalability, sustainability and adaptability are strong characteristics of the alternative given its reliance in technological tools that would allow its cost-efficient deployment. However, as it does not incorporate specific elements to ensure that young people actually get hired or have the appropriate skills, it is not the best alternative to reduce directly the share of young NEET population. Additionally, the reliance on mostly technological services represents a real challenge for equality and for assuring that people with appropriate technological means and digital literacy can access the service.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous analysis has systematically addressed in a rigorous way both the causes and potential solutions of the NEET young problem in Colombia. This includes the identification of evidence about the magnitude of the problem and who it affects the more, like the case of women and other vulnerable groups. A systemic and logical analysis of the problem of young NEET population shows a complex interdependence between economic, educational and social aspects and its solution should consider that complexity.

This exercise has contemplated different stakeholders relevant to education and employment youth policy and its incentives to realize the challenges in terms of change of conditions and behaviours. This includes the National Ministry, local authorities, students, employers and institutional educations, all whose present different interests and perceptions about the NEET problematic. The interconnection among these stakeholders is also present in the complex reality of the Colombian case, marked with demographic trends and particular violence and inequality challenges.

Given the identified root and intermediate causes, and the interest of the stakeholders, different alternatives were proposed. This proposal included alternatives related with a greater access to education through demand-side subsidies, integral care initiatives to support young women and vulnerable populations, a coupling programme between employers and education institutions, and the deployment of a public employment service infrastructure to provide information.

This policy paper also evaluated the alternatives logically on the basis of a multi-criteria analysis to identify potential trade-offs. This included the use of relevant criteria like the potential each alternative have to reduce young NEET population, the equality perspective, the implementation feasibility and its scalability, sustainability and adaptability. As is expected, some alternatives are stronger in some criteria and weaker in others, so a weighted calculation and a rational justification of the values and differences is useful.

The conclusion of the policy analysis process is that a coupling program that promotes the match between private and public employers and education institutions to provide tailor-made and focused training for vulnerable population can have the greater chances of reducing the share of

young NEET population at the same time that contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of Colombian society in a sustainable, feasible and adaptable way.

A preliminary implementation outline would consider different actions and efforts from various perspectives and with the involvement of several stakeholders.

69. Establishing a inter-ministerial work group between the Ministry of Labour and education to design the implementation for Job-School Coupling Initiatives is a first action that can define a fructiferous collaboration between the two departments.
70. Incentives must be recognized and created for educational institutions to develop flexible, market-responsive curricula and training programs that could be attractive for employers. This also includes the possibility of revisiting current funding needs in public institutions and even revisiting the regulatory framework that allows the creation of education programs.
71. Engaging with employers from strategic growth sectors to identify skill gaps and co-design training programs to be adopted by education institutions. This includes the collaboration with Commerce guilds and private associations to start identifying the needs and potential job creations.
72. Develop special attention and instruments within the program to ensure women, ethnic minorities, and low-income youth receive special attention. This requires the articulation with social departments and other ministries to recognize the particular need of vulnerable groups in every location, and to start sensibilizing about the value and relevance of taking care responsibilities more seriously.

Mitigation actions in the case of uncertain scenarios of economic recession, technological disruption and migration pressures are relevant. A way to make the policy alternative more robust by considering the training on sectors that could be less affected by recessions (like healthcare and some services), being aware of changing trends in the technological sector and design scalable platforms and networks for facing potential youth population growth due to internal or external migration.

The current 3 million young Colombians without education or employment opportunities represent a unused potential that can be transformed through the synergy between the public and private employers and the education sector. Political, administrative and technical will is required to promote a mindset change among employers, education institutions and young people, but it will represent a new way of connecting the potential of young people with the broader development process of Colombia.

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CHAPTER THREE: JOURNEYS OF WAR AND WELCOME

Inside the Butterfly Bar

ESSAY 1: RETURN BUT NOT RESOLUTION. FILIPINO MIGRANTS AND THE MYTH OF TRIUMPHANT HOMECOMING

By *Gabrielle Tañada*, GDP, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

In policy and public discourse, return migration is usually portrayed as the final chapter in a migrant's journey. In the Southeast Asian region, the Philippines has the largest share of migrants, majority of whom are women (ASEAN, 2024, p.19), and remittances additionally are one of the key economic strategies. In the Philippine context where migrants are touted as modern-day 'heroes' whose remittances fuel national development, migrants are typically celebrated as those who found success abroad and supported positive transformation locally (Rodriguez, 2002). However, stories of returning home include a wide variety of experiences that may include celebration and warm welcomes as well as precarity, vulnerability, and enduring challenges that may lead to additional migration events.

This essay aims to explore the multifaceted experiences of Filipino labor migrant workers who return to the Philippines, focusing specifically on how they reintegrate with their communities, whether their migrant journey was defined as one of success or failure. In challenging the idea of 'homecoming' I will draw on the works of Eric J. Pido in *Migrant Returns: Manila, Development, and Transnational Connectivity* (2017), and Hans J. Ladegaard, *Migrant Workers' Narratives of Return* (2023). I will also incorporate post-development critiques and intersectionality to better understand whose returns are celebrated, whose are denigrated, and how the intersection of identity and mobility shape reintegration. Ultimately, this essay argues that the story does not end when people on the move return home, but that returning is instead an opportunity for renegotiation between aspirations and realities, movement and stasis.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS AND RETURN MIGRATION

Development and migration are intrinsically connected. While the migration-development nexus has seen both ups and downs in political discourse, most researchers agree that development drives migration and migration, while not the sole answer to structural development challenges, can also contribute towards development of both origin and destination countries (De Haas, 2019,

pp.18-21). De Haas further argues that while remittances can bring benefits for individuals and their respective households, without structural reform migrants are just as likely to settle their families in migrant-receiving states, rather than returning and investing in their origin country (2019, p.28).

Geiger and Pécoud also challenge the migration-development narrative, as it is shapes and is shaped by states, international organizations, and NGOs in justifying labor migration regimes (2013). Applying this to the Philippine context, the narrative places migrants as not just development agents but as heroes and heroines, while the same agents often face challenges such as nonpayment of wages, horrible working conditions, labor rights violations (ADBI, OECD, and ILO, 2021, p.12) in addition to the burden of financing their community.

De Jong and Dannecker emphasize the role of storytelling in migration management, evident in how the IOM and EU's collaboration on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programs and how personal migration stories are used to support policy goals, such as promoting migrant return as 'local development' whether through the migrant's own agency or state-induced (2017, p.80). Like the migrants featured in the IOM "i am a migrant" campaign, labor migrant returnees face a pressure to perform success, and those who were not deemed 'successful' were silenced.

Given the increasing political push towards migrant returns, it is necessary to clarify the definition of return migration. King states that return migration is "when people return to their country or region of origin after a significant period abroad or in another region (King, 1986b, p.4; 2000, p.8, cited in King and Kuschminder, 2022). Return migration can be examined by numerous typologies, such as (i) the level of development of involved countries and skill of the migrant, (ii) temporal and geographic criteria, (iii) distance, and most critically for the purpose of this essay (iv) the motivation and circumstances of return (King and Kuschminder, 2022, pp.4-5).

Bastia's (2014) framework on intersectionality in migration and development is key to analyze how gender, class, and legal status shape migration and reintegration experiences. This will be particularly useful in examining the ethnographic / life story approach towards the case study of the Philippine return migrants.

Altogether, these theoretical contributions allow a more nuanced understanding of return migration. I will use these to challenge crafted development narratives and focus instead on the structural challenges and intersectional complexities that migrants face when returning.

BALIKBAYAN - WHY DO MIGRANTS RETURN?

To examine the case study of Philippine migrant returnees, I will use Battistella's fourfold typology of motivations behind return migration: (i) return of achievement, (ii) return of completion, (iii) return of setback, and (iv) return of crisis or forced return (King and Kuschminder, 2022, p.5). In *Migrant Returns: Manila, Development, and Transnational Connectivity* (2017), Pido explores how movement is governed not just by economic returns but also through "the active imagining constituted by those migrants who are actually returning as well" (p.25). The term 'balikbayan' is a combination of two words, 'balik' and 'bayan', which when translated directly mean return home/to the motherland – and for this discussion, it might also be relevant to note that 'bayani' translates to hero. Legally, 'balikbayan' is defined in Republic Act 9174, dividing balikbayans into three categories: (i) returning resident who lived abroad for at least a year, (ii) Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) who worked in a foreign country under an employment contract and is returning, and (iii) former Filipino who acquired foreign citizenship and is returning to resettle. Colloquially however, balikbayan refers to Filipinos who have settled in countries in the Global North who may or may not visit the Philippines, distinct from OFWs who have set durations in their migration journey indicated in their employment contract (Pido, 2017, p.70).

Pido's work highlights the complicated and contradictory nature of homecoming, which is a convergence of transnational aspirations, inequal economic development, and social connection (or disconnection). Economically, these returning migrants are deeply embedded in tourism, retirement, and real-estate programs of the Philippines. A cohort of more financially capable balikbayans channel their earnings into purchasing land, building houses, or developing small businesses, aligned with the common conception of supporting local economic development. However, often these developments are focused on rapidly gentrifying areas, characterized by high rises and business centers, where a majority of Filipinos would not be able to experience the benefits (Pido, 2017). Pido's personal experience of the dispossession of his grandfather's land, displacing informal settlers who made their homes in the unoccupied area, also inadvertently

reinforces the structural patterns of inequality and demonstrates de Haas' perspective of the paradoxical migration-development nexus.

Moreover, Pido's work reveals how these balikbayans navigate social spaces and their identity as constructed by policy, by their fellow Filipinos, and by their own selves (2017). By the mobility that they exercise, migrants' identities are never static but instead contingent on the spaces they occupy and the relationships within. But return migrants who have experienced that find themselves changed even as they return home. Despite the Philippine government's official language for migration claiming OFWs and balikbayans as 'heroes', their relative successes also engender a sense of superiority and envy. Pido states that balikbayans are viewed paradoxically as both heroes and traitors: Traitors for abandoning their home country and seeking wealth abroad, but simultaneously heroes for supporting the Philippines by returning. This perception is further strengthened in comparison to foreign migrants who settle in the Philippines, such as the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese who are instead seen as taking advantage of Filipinos (ibid, p.176).

This complicated narrative also shapes how balikbayans perceive themselves like Filipinos in the Philippines but, for those who are 'successful', Filipinos who have achieved a modicum of wealth that allows them to leave the Philippines and return home for as long as they can afford to do so (Pido, 2017, p.177). Sacrifice and duty for the wellbeing of the family are core principles for all Filipinos, nonetheless migrants. When balikbayans build their homes in the Filipinos, each decision is driven by the motivation of family reunification, and these decisions are reflected in the perception of balikbayans as caretakes for not just their families but the welfare of the homeland. Unfortunately, Pido shares that many of these returnees also express deep regret over the differences in the Philippines and the places they migrated to, with the traffic, dirt, seemingly omnipresent bureaucratic corruption, and crime; in addition to frustration that their remittances and return have not led to more marked improvements in the Philippines' economic development (ibid, p.176).

The stories shared in Pido's work (2017) echo Geiger and Pécoud's observations (2013) that migrants are instrumentalized by policy frameworks, placed as tools rather than rights-bearing individuals. This case study deepens the understanding of contradictions within the migration-development nexus and the lived realities of balikbayans as agents negotiating the promises and

pitfalls of transnational life. And it grounds the idea of 'return' not as an end but another uncertain phase of mobility.

Of course, the Balikbayans shared here only represent a specific kind of Filipino migrant returnee. There are many who are less fortunate and return to the Philippines only to seek mobility once again.

EMOTIONAL NARRATIVES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RETURN

As return migration rises in popularity among state and policy discourse, it is important to reflect on its limitations and challenges. Return migration is often framed in discourse as a linear, goal-oriented process, contributing to national development. However, returnees' own stories complicate this narrative. Ladegaard's *Migrant Workers' Narratives of Return* (2023) provides necessary insight into the aspects of return, particularly focusing on Filipino domestic workers (also referred to as domestic helpers) returning from Hong Kong, though his work also covers Indonesian migrants as well. Through qualitative interviews and discourse analysis, Ladegaard shares that return is not always celebrated by migrants but may be experienced as loss, disorientation, or even failure (2023). This is especially prevalent when certain expectations set by the family, the state, or the migrant for their own migration journey remain unmet.

Participants in Ladegaard's ethnographic studies shared stories of dread and anticipation, pride and disappointment, trauma and empowerment when they discussed their migration journeys and returns (2023, p.27). Ladegaard argues that migrant women are barely given a choice when it comes to finding labor opportunities abroad if it means providing for their family and giving them a future (ibid., p. 30). They exchange their ability to be together with their spouses and children for the opportunity to generate livelihood and risk their husband's infidelity. Migration forces the redefinition of traditional gender roles and reprioritization of traditional family values, positioning women as breadwinners and lifting their families from poverty at the expense of physical presence and proximity (Ladegaard, 2023, p.35). After working away from home and leaving their family behind, many women share that they feel alienated within their own homes upon return, with their families rejecting them as mothers and wives after the time away.

Significantly, the stories Ladegaard shares of Filipina migrant returnees are positive in contrast to the Indonesian migrant returnees (2023, p. 69). Those who were interviewed held somewhat influential roles in upper-class households or had generous employers who were willing to contribute to their Filipina helper's pension and support their children's education (ibid, p. 71). While there were also Filipina domestic migrant workers who experienced various issues with exploitative employers and horrible working conditions, Ladegaard shares experiences of those who were able to stand up for their own rights (2023, p.77).

In relation to the narrative of OFWs as heroes, the Filipina migrant workers preferred the term 'domestic helpers', which Ladegaard interprets as how these women see themselves as people "who have made sacrifices in order to help others: their families, their country, and the people of Hong Kong, and by doing so, they are serving God and thereby a higher purpose in life" (2023, p.72). Most strikingly from Ladegaard's accounts is how migrant mothers must actively suppress their emotions because it prevents them from doing that they have to do and leave their children to be cared for by others (p.102).

For Filipina returnees, success is usually defined in whether their sacrifices and efforts allow them the ability to afford building a new home and putting their children through education. The largest dilemma for these migrant returnees is that coming home means returning to unemployment and little to no income (Ladegaard, 2023, p.102). Many of the women interviewed who returned home shared that they would migrate again should there be any opportunity, though only a few were actively seeking employment overseas and most indicated they were content with their lives.

An intersectional lens helps unpack how different returnees navigate their experiences abroad and returning home. The focus of this section being the female migrant in the traditionally gendered role of domestic work, situates itself clearly in Bastia's (2014) intersectional analysis. And while the stories of these Filipina returnees were generally optimistic in tone, it is still relevant to question as Raghuram (2009) does: 'what development, and for whom'? The efforts of these Filipina returnees abroad helped some of them better their families' economic standing, but the structural development issues remain as they return to lacking or subsistence livelihood.

CONCLUSION

The return home does not mean the end of the hero's journey. This essay has explored the complex relationship between dominant policy narratives of return migration and the actual lived realities of Filipino migrant workers who return home, drawing on Eric J. Pido and Hans J. Ladegaard's research. Engaging with critical migration and development literature, it is clear that return is not a straightforward development success story. Return migration can generate new forms of insecurity, social exclusion, and precarity. Filipino returnees are courted by the state as agents of national development but their narratives and the pressures they face to deliver success reveal an emotional toll. These stories of migration and return demonstrate that migration is not linear and that requires an intersectional understanding of mobility, homecoming, and development. The stories of people on the move and the development of their families, communities, and countries are not just about the economic aspects but also the social connections they break or create, the dignity they lose or retain, and the complex pathways through it all. This essay calls for discourse on the migration-development nexus that takes into account the nuances that migrant returnees deserve.

Stories of return are varied and complex. Untouched in this essay are the spectrum of experiences belonging to refugees, asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced individuals; those who voluntarily return to 'safety' or are forced to return to continuing precarious conditions, which can be explored in further research.

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ESSAY 2: TECHNOLOGIES OF EXCLUSION AND CONTROL: ANALYSING THE GERMAN PAYMENT CARD FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM A BOTTOM-UP, INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Liya Mekonnen. Mundus Mapp. Germany and Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Although Germany has taken in millions of refugees in the past, as evidenced in the summer of 2015, in recent years it has been tightening its borders. As one of the major refugee-hosting countries, in 2024 alone Germany received over 200,000 asylum applications (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), 2025). Those fleeing from war and political persecution can find refuge there if their asylum application is approved and they are granted refugee status. However, while they await their asylum decision several years can pass during which asylum seekers are often confined in remote, prison-like environments and not given a chance at meaningful life (Jørgensen, 2019, p. 42). With far-right sentiments on the rise, refugees are increasingly viewed as "scroungers" who are using up the resources locals are entitled to (Jørgensen, 2019, p. 41).

Politicians have been looking for ways to restrict the inflow of asylum seekers and subdue the demands of overburdened municipalities. Hence, in 2023 they first discussed the introduction of the cashless debit card – 'the Bezahlkarte' - for asylum seekers' monthly allowance payments. In order to restrict how they use their monthly allowance, this card is meant to replace the cash which asylum seekers receive from the government for their subsistence needs. The main idea behind it is to limit asylum seeker's ability to send money abroad to their home countries or to smugglers. Although not yet introduced nation-wide, several local districts across Germany have begun implementing it.

In the following, I will analyse the implications of this payment card on asylum seekers, considering how it acts simultaneously as a technology of exclusion and control. The aim of the paper is to look at migration issues "from below", hence taking on a migrant-centric narrative instead of a top-down, state-led one (Lavenex and Piper, 2021, p. 2847). I will argue that this digitalisation method controls asylum seekers' physical mobility, limits their agency and excludes

them from participation in social life. Moreover, it represents a bordering tactic, as with every use asylum seekers are involuntarily exposing their legal status.

Additionally, applying an intersectional lens, I will show how due to the interconnection of different categories of disadvantage such as age, legal status, gender, and origin, certain groups are disproportionately affected by the payment card (Bastia, 2014, p. 238). Lastly, I will demonstrate the ways in which asylum seekers have individually and collectively practiced agency in resistance against this new policy.

THE CONCEPT OF THE PAYMENT CARD

As detailed in the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act, when refugees arrive in Germany, they are provided shelter and basic necessities as they apply for asylum and await their asylum decision (BAMF, n.d.). This process of waiting can last multiple years, and asylum seekers are generally not allowed to work during this period, although exact conditions depend on the individual case. Up until 2024, the monthly benefit payments were given to asylum seekers fully in cash and those who were granted the ability to work or complete vocational training could receive money via their individual bank accounts. However, since the passing of an amendment to the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act in May 2024, a payment card system is gradually being introduced to replace these cash payments (Bundesregierung, 2025). With some states such as Bavaria already implementing it, the federal government has recently approved the method for nationwide implementation.

The main concept behind the payment card is to restrict the money which asylum seekers send abroad, to their family and friends, or to smugglers. By limiting their access to cash or normal bank accounts, the government is attempting to stop the flow of money into the asylum seekers' countries of origin. As it is believed that these payments to family at home are the reason why more people can make the trip to Germany for family reunification, restricting these should slow down the arrival of refugees. Although there is no proof of this explicit relationship, there is a large migration industry that benefits from the number of forced and voluntary migrants who want to make the trip to Germany (Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013). In this sense, the payment card is a border internalisation strategy, targeting the lucrative migration industry and stemming immigration flows even from within the country.

Another reason stated for the introduction of the payment card is to ease the bureaucratic burden of municipalities by allowing the digital, systematic distribution of monthly benefit payments instead of manual cash payments (Gesellschaft Für Freiheitsrechte e.V., 2024). Federal states can decide the exact conditions of the payment card themselves, including the cash withdrawal limits, the ability to make online purchases or bank transfers with it. They can also choose not to introduce the payment card, although in Bavaria and cities like Hamburg and Leipzig, the system is already being piloted (Mediendienst Integration, 2025). In most localities, the cash withdrawal limit is set at 50 euros a month although in some it reaches 120 euros. What this shows is that even within a country, physical location matters. It is not just territorial state boundaries that endow people with rights and duties, but specific places which are "complex networks of spatial relations" (Ochoa Espejo, 2018, p. 78).

What is important to note is that the "Bezahlkarte" is not a new concept. In other countries, such as the UK, New Zealand, and Australia, cashless debit cards have been implemented nation-wide already for instance for social security recipients and rejected asylum seekers (Bielefeld, 2021; Coddington, 2019). The use of the cashless debit card in the UK, the Azure card, comes closest to Germany's use of it. It permits only the purchase of groceries and basic necessities for rejected asylum seekers (Coddington, 2019, p. 528). The question remains: how does this look in practice in Germany? What are the explicit and implicit effects of the payment card on asylum seekers?

THE MULTIFOLD IMPLICATIONS ON ASYLUM SEEKERS

Technologies of Exclusion

Among one of the most obvious implications of the payment card's introduction is the exclusionary impact of it. Due to its special nature, the payment card is not accepted in all establishments in Germany. Paying with the card incurs costs for retailers and service providers; therefore, while larger grocery stores and establishments may accept the card, smaller businesses and food places often do not (Gesellschaft Für Freiheitsrechte e.V., 2024). In addition to this, according to the Deutsche Bundesbank, cash is still the most used method for sale transactions in Germany – in 2024, half of all transactions were in cash (Deutsche Bundesbank, 2024). Hence, cash is required in many places such as second-hand stores, flea markets, or at the farmers' market

where people can purchase their fresh produce for cheaper (Gesellschaft Für Freiheitsrechte e.V., 2024).

The introduction of the payment card and its low cash withdrawal limit severely restrict the services and goods asylum seekers can access. For instance, in one case a pregnant woman was unable to pay the additional costs for an ultrasound as her gynaecologist clinic did not accept the payment card (PRO ASYL, 2024). Other cases have been reported of families having to travel to other cities because the only grocery store in their small town does not accept the payment card (PRO ASYL, 2024). As asylum seekers are forced to adjust to the limitations of the new payment card system, they are increasingly sidelined and restricted in their choices. The payment card acts as a form of slow violence, one that reinforces exclusion of these groups and denies them participation in the nation (Coddington, 2019, p. 528). Considering that some await their asylum decision for multiple years, these payment cards lead to the gradual erosion of community life especially over extended periods of time (Coddington, 2019, p. 528).

Technologies of Control and Bordering Practices

Next to serving as a tool of exclusion, the payment card also serves as a technology of control. Through the digitisation of financial transactions, each purchase is traceable and trackable. In cases such as Australia and New Zealand, payment cards serve as budgeting support to help social benefit recipients save or to keep them from spending money on gambling, alcohol, or drugs (Bielefeld, 2021, p. 895). Hence, the payment cards are connotated with a paternalistic relationship between asylum seeker/social security recipient and the state. Cardholders are seen as incapable of making financial decisions of their own and are hence denied of their rationality and human capacities.

Moreover, the technology behind the card is wired so that the card can only be used within a specific radius – in the specific locality where refugees are accommodated (PRO ASYL, 2024). This is a more hidden but severe consequence of the payment card, as it represents a physical restriction of social life. Hence, visits to relatives who live in a different region, or trips to a neighbouring city to buy specific foods from their origin country are made almost impossible (PRO

ASYL, 2024). This exemplifies one of the many ways that "mobilities" are either explicitly or implicitly controlled (Kothari and Klein, 2023, p. 76).

On top of this, whenever an asylum seeker wants to use the card to pay for something, they involuntarily reveal their legal status in the country. Payment cards are associated with a "compulsory visibility" which marginalised populations would prefer to avoid (Bielefeld, 2021, p. 898). It draws attention to them in situations that can put them in dangerous and threatening situations. Instead of a quiet and dignified existence, they are forced into a loud and visible, yet severely sidelined and disadvantaged one. In this way, payment cards act as "bordering technologies" (Coddington, 2019, p. 528). Explicitly, the cards place a border around the locality to which asylum seekers are tied. More implicitly, they place a border between asylum seekers and their host country. Asylum seekers are constantly outed as not full members of the nation.

Intersectional Experiences and Agency in Resistance

As evident based on the previous analysis, the impacts of the payment card on asylum seekers are multifold. However, people experience these impacts differently based on their age, gender, legal status, and place of origin. For instance, the financial exclusion of asylum seekers can have differentiated impacts on men and women based on their cultural and gender norms. Male refugees are often faced with feelings of low self-esteem and social exclusion due to the "loss of access to social, material, and symbolic resources" through which their status is often defined in their home countries (Suerbaum, 2021, p. 389). Women with children may be disproportionately affected by the payment card due to the burden of care work they carry. Children also face social exclusion when they are unable to pay the cash required for social activities such as class trips.

Next to this, experiences can also differ based on asylum seekers' places of origin. Foreigners in Germany are already exposed to various discriminatory attitudes based on their ethnic or religious background (Antidiskriminierungsstelle, 2017). Due to the payment card, the discriminations minorities face based on their ethnic background is exacerbated by the involuntary exposure of their legal status. Furthermore, due to a special law passed in 2022, refugees from Ukraine are not required to go through the asylum application process and are instantly granted refugee status (Bundesregierung, 2024). Hence, they receive "Bürgergeld", citizens' benefits, without going

through the long waiting period that refugees of other origin countries face and are thus also not affected by the introduction of the payment card. This means that even though asylum seekers who have been in Germany for multiple years are affected by the payment card, due to their country of origin and their legal status, newer refugees can circumvent this form of financial exclusion. As a result, it creates new hierarchies within the asylum system, and experiences within it can differ greatly.

Despite the ways in which the payment card is encroaching upon asylum seekers' rights and agency, there are ways in which agency is negotiated. For instance, there are several cases in which people have received legal help and, on a case-by-case basis, managed to have their cash withdrawal limit increased (Thewalt, Hackenbruch, and Betschka, 2024). Some asylum seekers have been enacting "situated agency" by performing subtle acts of resistance (Masika and Bailur, 2015, p. 48). For instance, they have begun buying gift cards and trading these for cash (ZEIT ONLINE, 2025). This exchange action is supported by local refugee support groups, showing how host communities are standing in solidarity with the affected people. Similar to the Lampedusa in Hamburg (LiHH) movement, many migrant and civilian groups around Germany have mobilised to protest the implementation of the payment card (PRO ASYL, 2025). As of right now, the payment card is being implemented in more and more communes across the country, but it is unclear whether it will be adopted nation-wide.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the new payment card system for asylum seekers which has been introduced in various localities across Germany has multilayered consequences. Although the digitalisation of payment technologies is meant to ease the bureaucratic burdens on municipalities and facilitate financial service provision for asylum seekers, it has negative implications on their lives. Due to the special nature of the payment card and its low cash withdrawal limit, it severely limits asylum seekers' agency in Germany, constraining their choice of stores, services, and how and where they spend their money. It acts as a method of exclusion, control, and bordering, which leaves them without the ability to make meaningful choices and enact agency.

As the implementation of the card differs in each federal state, not only do territorial borders matter, in this case the random arbitrary assignment to a local municipality has grand implications on how an asylum seeker's life unfolds. The card goes as far as limiting asylum seekers' physical mobilities and sidelining them from certain spheres of public life. Moreover, card holders are exposing their legal status with every use of the card. In a country in which far-right sentiments are on the rise, this forced visibility puts asylum seekers in danger and exacerbates the discriminations they face in their daily lives. Considering the gender, age, ethnicity and country of origin of the asylum seekers, the payment card has differentiated impacts on them.

There are various ways in which agency is negotiated despite the payment card's multifold intersectional consequences. In certain localities gift card exchange actions take place regularly to help asylum seekers circumvent the cash withdrawal limit of the card. Through mobilising in activist groups and protesting the implementation of the payment card, they also enact collective agency. Some are also taking the legal route to circumvent the cash withdrawal limit in exceptional cases, though these cases do not lead to systemic change but rather improve individual conditions within the existing asylum system.

Overall, this paper has shown that the payment card in Germany is a clear case of how technology can be used as a form of control and as an exclusionary tactic, while also serving as a bordering strategy.

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ESSAY 3: IN WHAT WAYS DID GRASSROOTS MOBILISATIONS CHALLENGE THE UK-RWANDA BORDER EXTERNALISATION PLAN, AND HOW DID THIS INTERSECT WITH LEGAL CONTESTATIONS?

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This essay examines counter-mobilisation to the UK government's 2022-2024 plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda for claims processing as a means of engaging with the migration-development nexus from below. It draws from Kothari and Klein to understand the 'migration-development nexus' as the interconnected, bi-directional relationship between migration and development (2023, pp. 82). The essay first contextualises the analysis by outlining the plan's timeline, proposals, and stated aims before demonstrating how it instrumentalises the migration-development nexus to shield its more explicitly securitised objectives of deterring illegalised migrants. In line with Bhambra's "connected sociologies approach" (2015, pp. 104), it situates this plan within the colonial foundations of the UK's migration governance, arguing that this project not only externalises borders but also perpetuates colonial logics.

The core of the essay, however, focuses on the grassroots resistance from below. It examines migrant-led organising, direct action from asylum seekers, and wider collective mobilisations in turn before finally turning to strategic litigation cases. Drawing from El-Shaarwai and Razsa's notion of "movements upon movement" (2018, pp. 3), this essay brings together both literal and figurative senses of movement – migration and activism – in its analysis of how these different mobilisations intersected in their resistance. Despite media and public attention focusing largely on strategic litigation and court battles, it is argued that legal contestations formed one element of a wider, interconnected network of resistance that actively and collectively challenged this project of border externalisation.

CONTEXT: THE UK-RWANDA MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Between 2022-2024, the UK's plan to offshore its asylum processing responsibilities to Rwanda represented the latest development in its 'Hostile Environment' approach to asylum and

migration governance. Two legislative shifts preceded this policy proposal. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 illegalised all Channel crossings whilst systematically restricting safe and legal routes, and the Illegal Immigration Act 2023 mandated immediate deportation based solely on grounds of arrival (Lewicki, 2024, pp. 11). In sum, these Acts legislated a "near-ban on asylum and humanitarian protection" (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2023, pp. 399). Against this backdrop, the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership (hereafter MEDP) was introduced, mandating the transfer of asylum seekers who had arrived via 'dangerous' and illegalised routes to Rwanda – regardless of individual protection needs. Their claims would then be assessed under Rwandan law, with no right to return to the UK (Matera et al., 2023, pp. 280). This plan effectively outsourced the UK's responsibilities to identify and uphold international refugee protection obligations and was found to be disproportionately harmful to racialised asylum seekers by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR 2024, pp. 6).

The plan was immediately met with widespread criticism and legal challenges, with the first deportation flight halted on the runway following an injunction by the European Court of Human Rights. Despite various legal contestations, including in 2023 when the Supreme Court ruled that Rwanda was not a safe country due to risks of mis-assessment and refoulement ('R (on the application of AAA (Syria) and others) v Secretary of State for the Home Department', 2023) the plan continued to be pushed forward, with the government exploiting various loopholes by introducing new legislation that increasingly restricted independent juridical oversight. In 2024 the Safety of Rwanda Act was passed which declared Rwanda a safe country. After nearly two years of ongoing challenges from the wider public, various human rights organisations and mobilisation on behalf of asylum seekers, this legislation provided the legal framework from which the plan could be enacted. Although ultimately overturned following government change in July 2024, this plan remains a salient case study because it is emblematic of wider European migration policy trends leaning towards border externalisation and offshoring processing and protection responsibilities, and because of the high levels of resistance and very public counter mobilisations that actively challenged it.

ASSESSING THE MEDP PLAN THROUGH THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

The relevance of this bilateral agreement to the migration-development nexus is evident in its very title – the UK/Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership. Indeed, the plan was framed as beneficial for the development of both migrants and Rwanda more broadly, with the UK government promising to "enhance economic prosperity in the region" through investments in upskilling and development projects (HYPERLINK "https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-and-economic-development-partnership-factsheet/migration-and-economic-development-partnership-factsheet"Home Office, 2023). However, the developmental aims of the plan can be questioned on several levels. Fundamentally, the details of such projects, and specific localities within the "region" where the investments would be directed, were unspecified. Additionally, the plan failed to consider the intersectional nature of migrant identities and lived experiences (Bastia, 2014, pp. 239). Factors such as one's sexuality, race, gender, socio-economic status, age, language abilities and ableness shape the specific vulnerabilities or opportunities a migrant might face upon deportation to Rwanda. As Griffin notes, female and LGBTQ+ migrants were likely to face higher challenges due to the prevalence of gender-based violence and the marginalisation of queer people in Rwanda (2024, pp. 5). Nonetheless, portraying the deal as beneficial for both migrants and Rwandans overlooked how it could perpetuate the marginalisation and structural exclusion of certain populations.

From a more critical perspective, as Pina-Delgado argues, framing such partnerships within the migration-development discourse often serves a more strategic function, shielding underlying security concerns and legitimising the implementation of more restrictive controls on mobility (2013, pp. 411). In this case, the development rationale was particularly thinly veiled, given that the UK government also explicitly justified the partnership in terms of ensuring that "immigration to the UK is orderly and controlled" (Home Office, 2023). With this in mind, a more prominent function of this agreement was as a mechanism of border externalisation, spatially and institutionally shifting the UK's borders from its own territorial limits to Rwanda. Offshoring asylum processing responsibilities not only demonstrates a willingness on behalf of the UK government to put aside their obligations under international refugee and human rights law (Matera et al., 2023, pp. 286) but also demonstrates the "racialised hierarchies of human value" (Davies et

al, 2021, pp. 2309) underpinning mobility governance and the determination of who is deemed worthy of protection.

A border regime shaped by racialised hierarchies of mobility rights also draws upon and reproduces logics of coloniality (Lewicki, 2024, pp. 5). The historical continuities shaping the MEDP become evident when one considers how the offshoring of 'undesirable' populations in predetermined directions played a central role in the establishment and reinforcement of colonial borders during the British Empire and that these agreements were often justified in economic development terms (Collyer and Shahani, 2023, pp. 7 and 11). Applying Bhambra's "connected sociologies" approach to the MEDP to situate it within its colonial "pasts and present" (2015, pp. 103-104) also offers valuable insights into how this plan shapes notions of belonging in the British national imaginary. Bhambra argues that modern citizenship should be understood within the frame of domination, drawing attention to the purposeful exclusions that were fundamental to the normative and institutional emergence of modern citizenship (2015, pp. 106). The processes of displacement, dispossession and invisibilisation evident in the MEDP through the forced relocation it entails can thus be understood as a continuation of long-standing dynamics of domination that have always been central to the making and controlling of who belongs as British. From this perspective, the MEDP was not just about managing borders and migration flows. It also functioned to reinforce historical, racialised and geo-spatialised power asymmetries by shaping the lines of who belongs and who is excluded within national imaginaries.

AN INTERCONNECTED WEB OF RESISTANCE TO THE MEDP

Against this backdrop, this essay now turns to the central issue at hand: the resistance *from below* to the proposed deal. In doing so, it draws from El Shaarawi and Razsa's notion of "movement upon movement" (2018, pp. 13) in its analysis of how activism – a figurative movement – intersected with and resisted an attempt to control and restrict migration – a literal movement. As Jørgensen argues, the "politics of interference" takes place across several scales shaped by differing social-economic conditions which, in turn, influences the relative nature and methods of struggle (2019, pp. 42). In this case, the varying levels of precarity and legal capital of each set of actors influenced which strategy was adopted. This produced a unique web of

movements and mobilisations that collectively challenged the UK's border externalisation efforts, extending far beyond the contestations that happened through strategic litigation in the courts.

Migrant-led activist groups and organisers were at the forefront of resistance to the MEDP from its announcement. At the centre of these efforts was the Solidarity Knows No Borders community, who focused on proactive knowledge building and information circulation by distributing toolkits and info sheets for asylum seekers at risk of removal to Rwanda. These resources provided valuable information on legal rights and offered guidance on how to respond to surprise detentions and raids. Given the lack of transparency in the asylum system, amplified by the constantly shifting legal status of the plan across 2022-2024 which caused much uncertainty about the concreteness of its threat, this knowledge proved a vital forum through which asylum seekers could gain language on how to claim their rights and organise within detention centres. As El-Shaarwai and Razsa (2018, pp. 4) and Jørgensen (2019, pp. 53) both argue, collective knowledge production and dissemination is a crucial form of activism particularly when migration-related legal, political and bureaucratic structures are purposefully exclusionary and opaque.

Solidarity Knows No Borders also organised a Week of Action where over 60 events took place across 12 cities in 2022 (FIRM Charter, 2022). These ranged from protests and training sessions for public sector workers to art installations, film screenings and leafleting, demonstrating the multi-scalar and wide-ranging nature of collective resistance to the MEDP. Again, migrants were at the forefront of these actions, with Migrant Organise collaborating with several other social justice actors and campaigns throughout the week to organise, for example, an art installation drawing attention to immigration reporting and GPS tagging, workshops on digital privacy and a Carnaval of Resistance (Migrants Organise, 2022). Notably, they also hosted an online rally that featured stories of resistance from 22 migrant organisers. This highlights how activism strategies can be adapted in circumstances of legal precarity as it took place digitally rather than in-person because of how protests might pose particular risks to people with insecure or undocumented legal status. Taken together, the various mobilisations did not resist the Rwanda plan in isolation but also contributed to wider alliance-building by drawing connections between various intersecting struggles such as mobility and migration rights, climate justice, labour rights, and online safety.

A key form of resistance also emerged at several immigration removal centres across the UK, where dozens of detained asylum seekers set to be deported to Rwanda staged protests and hunger

strikes. Whilst the structures that physically and legally institutionalised their detention significantly constrained their ability to express dissent, these asylum seekers nevertheless adopted the most resistant methods possible. This aligns with Giddens' structuration theory for it demonstrates how they strategically negotiated their agency by acting upon the very structures constraining them to suit their own needs (1984, cited in Pei and Chib, 2021, pp. 582). By carrying out protests within the detention facilities designed to make invisible their existence, the asylum seekers subverted their conditions into a site from which to make visible their struggle and expose these structures. These actions exemplify the "politics of necessary interference" in that they generated new political subjectivities by bringing the conditions of their confinement to public attention (Jørgensen, 2019, pp. 48), disrupting the public imaginary that had, until that point, turned a blind eye to the injustices of their detention. Therefore, their protests can be understood not just as direct resistance to the UK's attempts to the MEDP but also at a more abstracted level as a way of challenging and subverting the very structures designed to silence and exclude them.

Important to this politics was its affective dimensions; through exposing the inhumane conditions of their treatment via the publicity that the protests and hunger strikes generated, the asylum seekers also mobilised solidarity across a wider alliance of grassroots movements focusing on human rights, abolitionism and other social justice-oriented struggles. Wider protests formed outside of the detention centres chanting "we are with you" and "refugees welcome", at times in unison with the asylum seekers (Atkinson, 2022), amplifying their resistance by generating higher media coverage. This made their criminalisation and marginalisation even more visible to a mass public audience, with widely publicised images of protests and asylum seekers divided by barbed-wire fences and high barriers starkly exposing the violent securitisation of their detention. Particularly as this plan sought to invisibilise asylum seekers by forcibly relocating them to Rwanda, the fact that these protests and the media attention they generated made visible the very bodies at risk of deportation marked significant acts.

Alongside collective counter-mobilisations and direct action taken by detained asylum seekers, legal contestations formed another layer of the resistance. Despite media and academic attention focusing largely on these challenges, they did not happen in isolation, but had an interconnected, mutually shaping relationship within the broader web of mobilisations. The most materially successful challenge – issued on behalf of the first set of asylum seekers set to be relocated by a coalition between the Public and Commercial Services Union alongside Detention Action and

Care4Calais – ultimately prevented the first flight from taking off. This achievement was only possible due to the coordination of various organisations and activist groups working closely with the detained asylum seekers, who were instrumental in gathering case referrals and building wider public pressure (Hossain, 2024).

The Supreme Court ruled the plan unlawful in November 2023, but the overall effectiveness of the various legal contestations can still be questioned because the government circumvented this ruling through new legislation, demonstrating the limits of juridical interventions in restraining a state determined to pursue its agenda. However, the legal challenges still played a significant role in exposing the injustices of the plan and disrupting its implementation. By continuously contesting and thereby delaying the MEDP, they bought critical time for the wider network of activism to generate more public awareness and support. Symbolically, these legal battles went beyond the plan itself, exposing the government's disregard for principles of international refugee and human rights law and reinforcing the broader counter-movement's intentions to expose the colonial, racialised and unjustly discriminatory nature and impacts of border externalisation. Therefore, the success of strategic litigation can be seen only when situating it as one part of a layered, dynamic and intersecting web of mobilisations that collectively functioned to resist, undermine and obstruct the plan.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the UK-Rwanda plan – framed within the migration-development nexus but functioning more blatantly as a mechanism of border externalisation – was challenged and resisted via an interconnected, multilayered web of counter mobilisations. Each set of actors, taking into consideration their own legal precarity and experiences of migration themselves, adopted distinct but mutually reinforcing strategies within the collective struggle of resistance. Collective, direct and legal mobilisations were not just in response to the humanitarian, moral and legal failings of this plan. They were also a challenge to and rejection of the broader historical, colonial structures that the notion of offshoring asylum seekers – and in doing so, invisibilising them from British national consciousness – upheld. This essay highlights the need to pay more attention to how grassroots resistance shapes and pushes back against migration policy changes, rather than focusing on legal challenges alone. However, the analysis has two major limitations. Whilst the

essay situated the plan within its colonial histories, more in-depth research is needed into how migration justice struggles intersect with decolonisation movements in the UK. What's more, given that the plan was abolished following a government change shortly after the Safety of Rwanda Act was finally passed, longitudinal research that investigates how collective mobilisations and legal challenges are resisting and shaping more recent policies that still pursue highly securitised border regimes is highly needed.

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ESSAY 4: TEMPORALITY IN PEACEBUILDING DURING AND 'POST' FIRST AND SECOND CHECHEN WARS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of temporality in peacebuilding during and 'post' First and Second Chechen Wars. First, it sets the historical scene of the protracted conflict. Second, it establishes and reflects on theoretical conceptualisations of time and temporality in peacebuilding. Third, it grounds the theory by exploring the relationship between temporality and peacebuilding during the First and Second Chechen Wars, and 'post' conflict. The paper concludes with the insights from the case study on the role of time and temporality in peacebuilding.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE RUSSIAN-CHECHEN CONFLICT

The Russian-Chechen conflict is one of the most protracted in the post-Soviet region (Azar, 1990; Druney, 2022). It began with the 18th-century colonial expansion of the Russian Empire in predominantly Muslim North Caucasus, as a heavily militarised occupation - garrisons, displacement of indigenous people, and settlement of Christian paramilitary civilians (Hughes, 2001). Chechens resisted Russian rule for over a century, losing half their population before their surrender in 1859 (Cofresi, 2002). After the Russian Empire collapsed, the peoples of the North Caucasus attempted to regain autonomy but were absorbed into the USSR (Hughes, 2001). Soviet-Russian colonial violence continued, ranging from forced Russification and Russian settlement to the 1944 "genocidal" deportation of 400,000 and execution of 14,000 Chechens (Cofresi, 2002; Hughes, 2001).

The fall of the USSR was followed by another attempt to shed Russia's control, with the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria declaring independence in 1991. In response, the Russian army invaded in 1994, launching the First Chechen War, killing over 100,000 and displacing 400,000 Chechens (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). In 1997, Russian and Chechen authorities signed a peace treaty, leaving Chechnya de facto autonomous (Lewis, 2022). In 1999, a series of terrorist attacks were carried out in Russia and officially attributed to Chechens - despite believable evidence of their manufacture by Russia, with many who argued this being assassinated (Eckel, 2019). Instrumentalising those attacks, Russia resumed its bombardment with a new counter-terrorism

discourse and tactics (Akhmadov, 2005). Meanwhile, the Chechen side was non-monolithic, initially centred around official authorities but gradually fragmenting - primarily along nationalist and Islamist lines, and over the use of guerrilla and terrorist warfare (Akhmadov, 2005). Through obliterating bombardment and "divide and rule" strategy, Russia imposed negative peace, installing defected clan leader Ramzan Kadyrov as the Kremlin's reinforcer (Hughes, 2022). While there was no official end to the Second Chechen War, Russian troops withdrew in 2009 (Druney, 2022). Russia continues systematic and systemic violence to control Chechnya, facing diverse resistance: from terrorist attacks to Telegram channels (Yuldasheva, 2022).

Following colonial logic, Russia's domination of Chechnya extended beyond material control to culture, language, and consciousness (Fanon, 1963). The very term "Chechen" was imposed by the Russian occupiers after seizing Chechen-aul village, manufacturing Caucasus people as "savages" needing "pacification" and "Christianization". The colonial Manichaeism permeates Russian culture, as the writings of Lermontov and Tolstoy, who served and wrote there, are central to Russian cultural code and education curricula (Cofresi, 2002; Yuldasheva, 2022).

THEORY AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF TIME AND TEMPORALITY IN PEACEBUILDING

Prior to exploring temporality in peacebuilding in Chechnya, it is crucial to map out and critically examine existing theorisations. This paper considers four papers: Lederach (2005), Shinko (2022), Behr (2011), and Ruette-Orihuela et al. (2023). Their overarching demand is to shift towards extended as opposed to linear temporality in peacebuilding. The scholars draw from different ontologies, complementing rather than contradicting each other. Lederach and Ruette-Orihuela et al. redefine temporality through decoloniality and non-Western knowledges. Shinko and Behr, too, problematize the hegemony of Western rationality over temporality - but through post-structuralism.

On Time: The Past That Lies Before Us by John Paul Lederach (2005)

Lederach recounts his decade-long journey of redefining time - not as a commodity to control but as a layered reality to attend to. His understanding was transformed by working with African-Caribbean Creole colleague Andy Shogreen, learning from Indigenous and African communities, and observing peacebuilding worldwide. He reconceptualises time in two ways: as

polychronic and as spacetime. The former means that past-present-future co-exist, and must be addressed as such. If peacebuilding fails to do that, injustices and violences persist. The latter reflects that for many - especially indigenous people - time is inseparable from space. This is because, in contrast to the disembodied and dislocated Western self, in other ontologies, identity is relational - interwoven with community, ancestors, descendants, and land. The land, which nurtured, was nurtured, and is inhabited by ancestors, is not a separate, inanimate entity but an integral part of the people's collective body. Displacement severs this connection, erasing collective existence.

Lederach celebrates the explicitly extended temporality of the Mohawk approach to peacebuilding, which accounts for land and seven generations before and after negotiations. He argues that differences in conceptualisations of time and neglect of the extended temporality of conflict fail peacebuilding efforts. Lederach proposes addressing four types of stories underlying conflict: narrative (history since day immemorial), remembered history, lived (embodied) history, and recent events. He argues that the only way to exit protracted conflict is by renegotiating history, identity, and relationships.

A Critical (Re)reading of the Analytical Significance of Agonistic Peace by Rosemary E. Shinko (2022)

Shinko critiques the liberal peacebuilding model for universalising linear time, through which it creates peace 'by imposition' through erasing ongoing structural violence. Failing to recognize time as a polychronic continuum, liberal peacebuilding frames war and peace as a temporal dichotomy. The declaration of peace as a clear-cut cessation of contestation invisibilizes ongoing violences, including historical and structural ones, leaving the relationship antagonistic. Instead, Shinko proposes agonistic peace as an extended temporal approach to peacebuilding.

She envisions sustainable just peace as a continuous negotiation within which parties recognise each other as adversaries rather than enemies. Shinko argues that this shift in mutual perception from enemies to adversaries requires extended temporality. She illustrates this through showcasing an interactive 'post'-conflict peacebuilding intervention in Colombia: various sides of the conflict narrated their life stories, with a clown helping to reframe them agonistically - "contextualised, yet not legitimated or excused" (p. 1402). This addressed the four stories proposed by Lederach. Shinko argues that humanising othered enemies in both the present and the past makes

renegotiation of the roots and congestions of a conflict possible, thus enabling future agonistic coexistence.

Peace, Temporality, and the Vivacity of Differences by Hartmut Behr (2011)

Behr elaborates upon Shinko's definition of liberal peace as antagonistic. He argues that liberal peacebuilding envisions peace as an overcoming of differences at the root of the conflict, which implies the existence of universal reason. However, this "universal" reason in reality is imposed either by one of the conflicting parties or an external actor. Therefore, it is not a negotiated social agreement on an 'equal' basis but antagonism. Moreover, Behr argues that the assumption of a universal reason is not only a poor peacebuilding approach but often the very cause of a conflict. In temporal terms, Behr considers the conceptualisation of a conflict as a temporal dichotomy between difference and cessation of difference as non-peaceful but imposing, violent, and unsustainable.

Instead, Behr proposes a phenomenological approach to peacebuilding, where time, history, and being are seen as ongoing, transformative processes rather than fixed entities. This allows exiting essentializing notions of identity, and instead redefines people as "beings-in-time". First, this is to prevent stereotyping and dominating over (groups of) people. Second, this is to reveal the eternally transformative nature of people and relationships, thus setting the scene for the continuum of agonistic peace. Similarly to the clown intervention described in Shinko, the phenomenological approach enables agonistic peace by rejecting the idea of history having a singular meaning.

Behr concludes that such an approach, inapplicable through direct policies, instead best applied through education, eliminates the reasons to engage in antagonistic violence. It enables the parties to live, act, and co-exist in difference. This is because phenomenological peacebuilding propagates peace as a continuous process of agonistic transformation of non-fixed objects entitled to multiple meanings, including those of the past-present-future.

Necropolitics, Peacebuilding and Racialised Violence: The Elimination of Indigenous Leaders in Colombia by Ruette-Orihuela et al. (2023)

This paper reflects on the failure of peacebuilding in Cauca, Colombia, as indigenous leaders continue to be mass murdered and threatened to be "cleansed" at a higher rate after, rather than before, the 2016 Peace Agreement. Like Shinko and Behr, the authors argue that there is no

clear temporal shift between war and peace: for example, homicides generally tend to increase in the first 5 years after peace treaties.

Ruette-Orihuela et al. enhance prior conceptualisations of the extended temporality of violence through the concept of coloniality. They argue that the Colombian state's peacebuilding has only focused on the recent armed conflict, neglecting the pre-existing and ongoing colonial violence. As a result, indigenous people continued to be disproportionately and increasingly targeted 'post' conflict. This is because the peacebuilding did not sufficiently address the presence of the 'past' - colonialism - in the present: through its logic of elimination, colonial distribution of and approach to power, imposition of 'fully human' ways of being and erasure of the othered ones, and structural racialization of indigenous people and land. The result is as follows. Paradoxically, amidst Colombia's peace, indigenous leaders say they and their communities are going through an unrecognised genocide, not only through mass murders, threats, and displacement, but also through the disruption of the harmony of their land-rooted lifecycles.

Ruette-Orihuela et al. validate and go beyond Lederach's proposed expanded temporality in peacebuilding, arguing that the neglect of the extended temporality of violence leads to necropolitics of peacebuilding. Rather than just addressing 'past' stories, the authors necessitate peacebuilding to structurally address the ideological, embodied, and material manifestations of the 'past' beyond the most recent conflict.

Tensions, Critiques, and Suggestions

All in all, the four texts reject the linear time of liberal peacebuilding with its temporal dichotomy between war and peace, instead proposing polychronic spacetime through which spans a continuum of conflict. As such, they urge for extended temporality for effective and sustainable peacebuilding, whether it is through addressing 'past' stories, agnostic peace, phenomenology, and decolonisation. There is little tension between the authors, except for some fixedness and normativity prescribed to indigeneity by Lederach and Ruette-Orihuela, as opposed to fluid identity proposed by Behr, and rejection of any normativity by Shinko in line with Foucault's agonism.

From this tension follows the first criticism. Indigeneity, spacetime, and historical multiplicity are central to the extended temporality approach in peacebuilding - but how are they defined? How far does extended time reach? Given that migration, coexistence, myths, and narratives shape

human history, this concept can be dangerously misused. Russia and Israel exemplify this, invoking historical restoration and indigeneity to justify colonialism, forced displacement, and genocidal violence (Putin, 2021; Scribe, 2023).

Second, recognising the world as highly urbanised, how can these concepts apply to those differently or dis-connected from the land? My suggestion is to explore the notion of extended temporality in peacebuilding in conflicts beyond ethnicity and nationality, such as within class-based struggles.

Third, giving credit to Indigenous and non-Western sources of knowledges and building nuanced philosophical arguments is crucial. At the same time, revealing the mundanity of extended temporality could make it more intuitive. For example: in a few hours, my body will absorb nutrients from the bread I am eating, which my mother baked yesterday, from rye farmers planted months ago, on land people have cared for over centuries. Framing it through lived experience could prevent resistance to extended temporality as an imposed abstraction. Generally, more grounded practical ways of applying extended temporality in peacebuilding need to be brought to light.

Fourth, while advocating for polychronic time, the authors largely focus on the 'past.' They could further develop how 'present' and 'future' coexist and overlap.

Fifth, though Indigenous knowledge does not require validation, incorporating scientific research on the temporal embodiment of violence - such as epigenetics, psychosocial, and environmental trauma studies - could be useful, especially in the context of the anthropogenic environmental crisis.

TEMPORALITY IN PEACEBUILDING DURING AND 'POST' FIRST AND SECOND CHECHEN WARS

First Chechen War

As the historical summary at the beginning of the paper makes clear, the Russian-Chechen conflict spans four centuries (Hughes, 2001). However, Russia has consistently rejected recognition of the colonial history of this violence, refusing to acknowledge Chechen resistance in the context of collective intergenerational trauma. This was also the case during its 1994 invasion, framed as a "restoration of a constitutional order", ignoring the history of the Chechen people (Druney, 2022, p. 46). On the contrary, the Chechen side has historicized the conflict throughout

the four centuries, including the First Chechen War, drawing from this memory as a "value base" and "an imperative that feeds [...] resistance" (Yuldasheva, 2022).

Chechen ex-Foreign Minister Ilyas Akhmadov argues that the main misunderstanding about the Russian-Chechen conflict stems from neglecting its history (2005). Chechens, he states, are not only fighting for independence but also survival, having been nearly exterminated as an ethnicity "at least four times", showing that the last three centuries are still present for him now (p. 29). Those can be understood as Lederach's narrative and remembered history. Many other Chechen resistance actors echo this narrative, aligning with the conceptualisation of conflict as a continuum of violence through polychronic spacetime (Druney, 2022; Lederach, 2005; Shinko, 2022).

Akhmadov recalls the "only period" when Chechens felt seen: peace negotiations from 1995 to 1997 (2005, p. 29). At that time, the free press in Russia and OSCE mediation provided visibility, as the War on Terror discourse had not yet emerged, exposing Russia's military atrocities while past repressions resurfaced. As a result, the Chechen resistance gained international sympathy and de facto autonomy (Akhmadov, 2005; Druney, 2022). However, Russia itself made no effort in historically reparative peacebuilding. Instead, it invaded again in 1999, this time denying any extended temporality to Chechens.

Second Chechen War

The Second Chechen War was waged under the name of counter-terrorism, framing Chechen resistance as purely Islamist, driven by ideology rather than history or material conditions (Druney, 2022). This was despite the public evidence of possible involvement of the Russian power structures in the 1999 terrorist attacks attributed to Chechens (Eckel, 2019). As a response to those, and especially following 9/11, Putin positioned Russia as central to the War on Terror, dismissing criticism over its Chechnya tactics as ungratefulness (Lewis, 2022). Western powers abandoned support due to global securitisation (Akhmadov, 2005; de Waal, 2014). Despite internal divisions, all factions of Chechen resistance, including Islamists, emphasised the conflict's historical dimensions, demanding an end to Chechen "genocide," Russian troop withdrawal, and peace talks (Druney, 2022). However, unlike during the First Chechen War, independent media were suppressed, humanitarian agencies were attacked, and international support was scarce - the Chechen attempts at peacebuilding through extended temporality were disabled. While denying mnemonic recognition to Chechens, Russia extensively commemorated victims of the Beslan

hostage-taking, selectively extending temporality for non-Chechen victims while muting Chechen grievances. Though instrumentalising temporality, Russia framed itself as an anti-terror warrior, and Chechens as dehistoricized terrorists (Druney, 2022). Exploiting Chechen resistance fragmentation, Russia co-opted the Kadyrovtsi clan, institutionalising coloniality of power (Ruette-Orihuela et al., 2023). Through them, Russia established peace through terror, mixing selective extended temporality into pacification (Sukhov, 2024).

'Post'-Conflict

The established peace is exemplarily antagonistic, maintained through coercive violence and economic control by Kadyrovtsi and a few other elite families (Davies, 2024). In contrast to Behr's phenomenological peacebuilding, the elites enforce this antagonistic peace by imposing singular understandings of the Russian-Chechen conflict, Chechen identity, and way of life, punishing and erasing differences, as elaborated below (2011; Sukhov, 2024).

However, the temporality of this peace is not a clear-cut dichotomy, as is characteristic of the liberal peace criticised by the authors above. Russia never formally acknowledged the Chechen wars as wars at all - in line with Russia's consistent colonial pattern of denying the recognition of an equal opponent to colonies (see Engelhardt, 2022). Instead, these military actions are framed as internal interventions: the First Chechen War is called a "constitutional restoration," and the Second a "counter-terrorist operation" (Lewis, 2022). There was no peace agreement at the end of the Second Chechen War. Within this colonial framework, occupation is rebranded as temporarily extended peacebuilding. Through this war-peace extension, Russia never recognises, and thus never condemns and retributes for its violences. Temporality becomes a tool of power: by selectively extending temporality to its 'peacemaking' but not Chechen existence, Russia denies Chechens the legitimacy of their polychronic grievances and suppresses their collective historical memory by silencing, instrumentalising and distorting it.

The selective extension of temporality as a tool of antagonistic, illiberal 'peacebuilding' is best captured in Kadyrov's politics. On one hand, the establishment of his rule is through some symbolic 'restorations' for Chechens, such as Kadyrov's title as the president and official "return" to Chechen traditions and religion (limited to his sect), culminating in his assertion that Sharia prevails over the Russian law (Ter, 2024). While those are tools of power consolidation, they are also virtue signals of historical restoration (though they are not necessarily historical), necessary

to pacify the public that was just obliterated by Russian bombs. On another hand, Russia and Kadyrov deny other aspects of Chechen extended temporality by manufacturing alternative historical narratives, such as perpetuating the idea that Chechens have always been pro-Russian, and that the First Chechen War was orchestrated by the West, punishing any utterances that it was pro-independence (Ter, 2024). The importance of expanded temporality in Kadyrov's pacification and control is particularly evident in his shifting narrative about the 1944 Chechen deportation. At the beginning of his rule, he blamed the Chechens themselves for the deportation and banned any public acts of remembrance. Due to public outcry, Kadyrov changed his narrative, denouncing Stalin's actions for the past 3 years (1ADAT, 2025). Here, the initial denial of extended temporality is replaced by the selective permission of it for the sake of illiberal 'peacemaking'.

While Kadyrov's 'peacekeeping' so far has been successful in preventing large insurgencies, the conflict is considered unresolved (Nibali, 2021). The selective extended temporality is insufficient, and the past is aching, resulting in resistance. While the regime frames this resistance as purely Islamist or West-instigated, it is clearly driven by polychronic grievances in search of Chechen autonomy (Yuldasheva, 2022). An emblematic example of this is the 1ADAT Telegram channel-turned-people's-movement "in occupied Chechnya for independence" (1ADAT, 2025). Adat stands for Chechen customary law - the movement is clearly rooted in the nation's history (Ford, 2015). The channel keeps track of the victims of the Kadyrov regime, simultaneously commemorating the centuries of Russian violence. This polychronic archive is seen as a threat by the authorities: it was banned on the Russian territory, its moderator was publicly humiliated, tortured, and killed, the mother of one of its creators was imprisoned based on falsified allegations, and eventually the Telegram app itself was banned in Chechnya "over security concerns". Ironically, this led to the channel gaining more followers (Bandouil, 2025; Chukharova, 2024; Sevrinovsky, 2022). The future of Kadyrov's peace is uncertain, especially in light of his deteriorating health (Davies, 2024).

REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION

Overall, the extended temporality approach to peacebuilding proves useful in understanding the recent chapters of the Russian-Chechen conflict. Four temporal aspects emerge as particularly important to the process and outcomes of peacebuilding. First, the Chechen case underscores the importance of approaching (protracted) conflict as a continuum of violence rather

than a war-peace dichotomy. Second, it illustrates how polychronic grievances fuel the conflict, necessitating temporarily extended peacebuilding for a just, sustainable peace. Third, it exemplifies colonial (im)material manifestations of the past within the present, such as the coloniality of power enacted by Kadyrov, and suggests that they need to be addressed not only discursively but also structurally. Fourth, it shows the role of the imposition of singular time, identity, and being for antagonistic 'peace'. The notions of indigenous spacetime and differences in time conceptualisation by conflicting parties need to be further explored.

However, situating the theories within this context also exposes gaps and raises questions. The authors propose extended temporality in opposition to the linear temporality of liberal peacebuilding; their conceptualisations are lacking when it comes to illiberal peacebuilding (Lewis, 2022). The Chechen case shows that extended temporality can be appropriated, selectively granted, and instrumentalised by the dominant side, as far as to frame centuries-long colonial occupation as temporarily extended peacebuilding. The authors' proposal of extended temporality in peacebuilding rests on the assumption that conflicting parties acknowledge the rupture and are willing or forced to have a dialogue with each other. That is not the case with the Pax Russica model. The proposal needs to be developed in the context of the following questions: What counts as peacebuilding? Who gets to do it, and by what means? How can extended temporality be implemented in peacebuilding to enable just, lasting, agonistic peace rather than be instrumentalised for further antagonism? While existing theories on time and temporality in peacebuilding are useful for understanding the Russian-Chechen conflict, they need to be further elaborated in the illiberal context to suggest resolutions.

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ESSAY 5: UNDERSTANDING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS APPROACH

By Gitanjali Kamra. GDP. India.

INTRODUCTION

The Humanitarian- Development- Peace (HDP) nexus, also called the triple nexus, has brought a cultural shift in the humanitarian space. Its objective is to improve coordination and inter-relations between humanitarian, development and peace actors, recognizing that these needs are not sequential or in silos. This framework moves beyond immediate concerns, to address root causes and durable solutions.

Whilst it has gained traction, the triple nexus also raises questions – how do different actors define contested concepts like peace? How is it implemented? A critical understanding is needed given the dangers of a simplistic application of this concept to the humanitarian field (Howe, 2019, p.1). This essay seeks to understand the nexus, its contributions, challenges and opportunities. It substantiates the argument with reference to the report "*The humanitarian-development-peace nexus and forced displacement: Progress, insights and recommendations for operational practice*" by the OECD and UNHCR (2024), hereinafter referred to as the OECD report.

THE TRIPLE NEXUS- AN OVERVIEW OF MILESTONES

The triple nexus envisions a synchronized, non-linear collaboration amongst humanitarian, development and peace actors. Whilst these ideas were in existence for long, it was the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 which affirmed that protracted crises required support not just for immediate needs but also towards reduction in vulnerabilities and investment in peaceful societies. The UN's 2018 "Sustaining Peace" report, strongly encouraged a coming together of these streams, signifying a shift from the predominant "double nexus" approach (Brown and Mena, 2021, p. 9).

One of the biggest milestones in HPD policy was its adoption by the OECD Development Assistance Committee as a policy priority in 2019, particularly in early engagement, inclusion of displaced population in development and climate programs, and in addressing drivers of

displacement. The recommendations were endorsed by all member countries, the EU and several UN bodies. Based on this framework, the OECD report examines 27 HDP initiatives for refugees and IDPs in low- and middle-income countries. It highlights how solely focussing traditional humanitarian funding cycles is insufficient to address needs of forcibly displaced people- that peace and development are integral for sustainable outcomes. For instance, attention should shift beyond short term humanitarian needs to job creation, security, child welfare, host community needs and others.

The report observed that there is progress in long term development support by donors, including for host communities, and new funding mechanisms have emerged towards this end. There is greater emphasis on empowerment of displaced community members, rather than viewing them as passive recipients. At the same time, there are gaps such as a lack of a comprehensive approach that tackles structural issues (for instance, programs that focus on skilling, while not addressing labour demand). Minimal funding goes to host country governments, who are key development actors. Further, peace activities focus mostly on cohesion, rather than structural displacement drivers in origin countries.

A NEW PARADIGM?

The triple nexus both overlaps and differs from previous humanitarian paradigms. It differs from the classical Dunantist approach which embodies the principles of "humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence", bounded by the objective of saving lives and reducing suffering in the short term. The Dunantist approach is rooted in 'exceptionalism', that is a clear difference between crisis and normality (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 3) The triple nexus' integrated and long- term approach 'beyond' crises contest this, as well as ideas of neutrality – for instance through working together with several stakeholders including governments.

An approach that the triple nexus overlaps with is the "humanitarian resilience" paradigm, as both centre on people's capacities as agents of change rather than as 'beneficiaries.' Like the triple nexus, resilience advocates for a long-term approach to address repeated underlying vulnerabilities, with local communities as central actors. Nevertheless, resilience has been critiqued as a neoliberal paradigm in which individuals are overemphasized, that is, the burden of

responsibility is placed on those affected individuals without addressing structural issues, thus risking abandonment. (Hilhorst, 2018)

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

One of the biggest challenges of the triple nexus is a lack of clarity on implementation and operationalization. (Hövelmann, 2020) The OECD report too highlights how a comprehensive and coordinated approach towards strategic outcomes is lacking. This can be linked to the fact that principles may often come into conflict, for instance, the humanitarian principles of neutrality as opposed to the development principle of working with governments (Howe, 2019, p. 10).

Howe (2019) highlights the "dangers of greater convergence" in the case of Afghanistan, wherein development and humanitarian action was instrumentalized for political gain. Therefore, some have critiqued this approach, stating that in certain situations, operating in silos may be needed to not compromise on humanitarian principles.

This is further linked to the challenge of conceptualizing "peace". Brown et al. (2024) highlight how different conceptions of peace – such as peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace-making are all profoundly political and interest- driven, thus taking several forms and leading to confusion. At the same time, a diffuseness in this concept is also an opportunity- as it gives organizations space to decide on their programs based on several factors like context, mandates etc, thus offering several possibilities (ibid).

Another challenge, as well as an opportunity is that of climate change in regards of the nexus. Practitioners have called for the addition of climate change as a fourth stream of this approach. However, Mena et al. (2022) suggest that rather than adding it as a separate stream, climate change should be integrated within the existing streams of the triple nexus, as otherwise there is a risk of exaggerating the role of climate change in itself and overlooking the complex interactions that lead to disasters and conflicts (ibid).

SECURITY, THE TRIPLE NEXUS AND HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES TODAY

The triple nexus has a complex relationship with security, (in)security and de-security. This is because of the humanitarian space as an "arena", a contested space with various actors, power struggles and negotiations that influence agendas (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010). This may lead to development as either a de-security issue in which it is framed in terms of social empowerment, or a security issue over migration. Similarly, humanitarian aid can be adhered to in its "neutral" principle, or instrumentalized for aid objectives.

Nguya and Siddiqui (2020) discuss the blurring of aid with security measures, where peace can be seen as "stabilization" Stabilization for IDP groups is part of UN country missions in Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Iraq. This requires partnerships with host governments which may shrink the space for humanitarian principles like impartiality.

CONCLUSION – THE TRIPLE NEXUS GOING FORWARD

The HDP nexus has become increasingly central in today's world of complex, protracted crises – with its important recognition of the need for convergence of three critical streams for real support to communities. Several organizations have begun to implement programs using this approach, showing much progress in longer-term, community centred and root cause programming, as the OECD report highlights.

However, this nexus is complex, with different meanings in concept and application for actors, particularly because of both ideological overlaps and differences. It is important that nexus priorities resonate with ground realities, which may also change over time. These realities either enable or prevent the triple nexus, which means that at times a principled distance helps, whilst in others, the three streams can and should be mutually reinforcing. Reflexivity by actors is thus needed while applying this concept.

Lastly, the nexus is still largely a UN-driven process. A diversity of stakeholders and open dialogue is needed for furthering the potential of this agenda, particularly local communities as leaders of the humanitarian, development and peace process.

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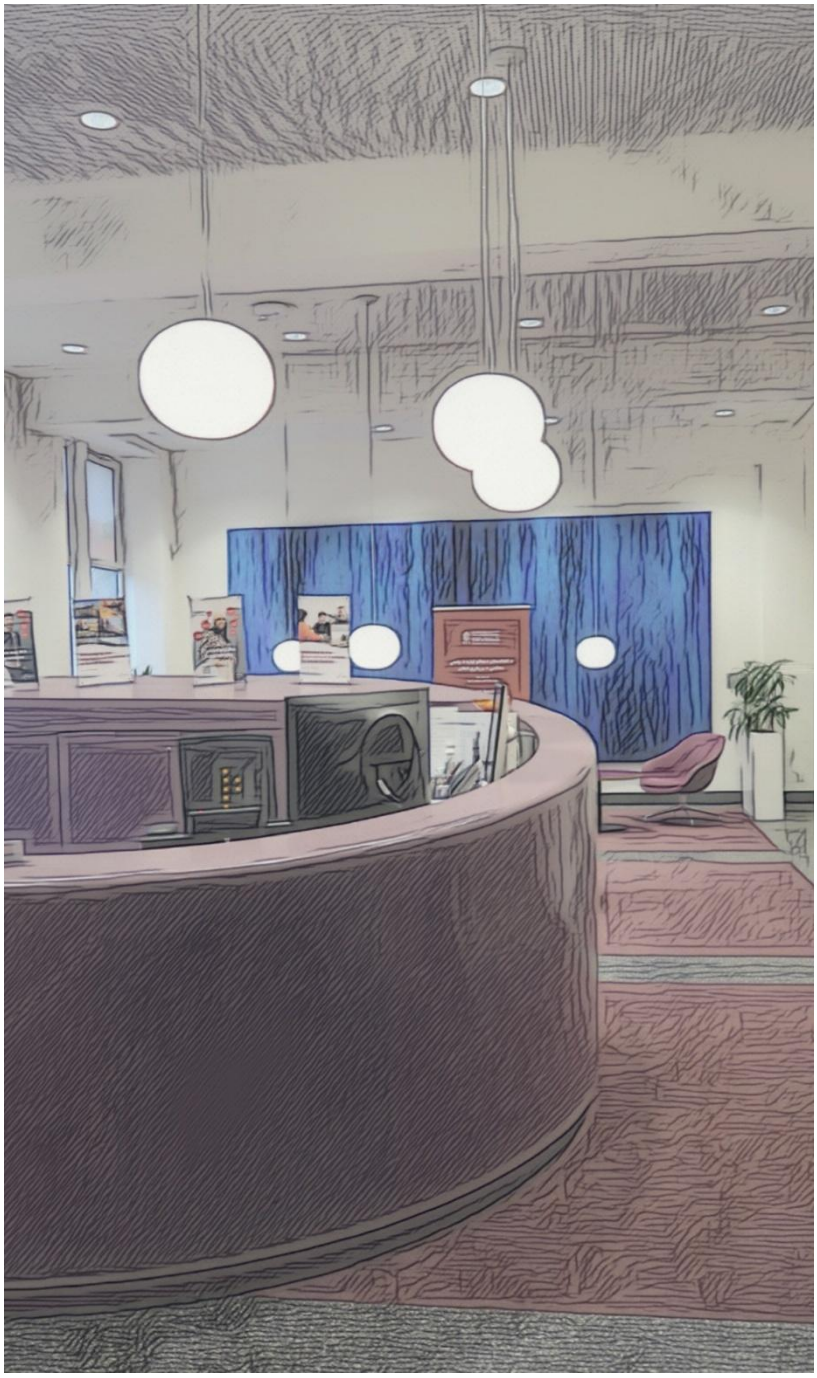
CHAPTER FOUR: AFTER DEVELOPMENT, PATHS TOWARDS PLURAL WORLDS



Reception

ESSAY 1: DECOLONIALITY AND THE SKIN-LIGHTENING INDUSTRY

By *Nabil Ruhaizat*. ECD. Malaysia.

SKIN-LIGHTENING AS COLONIAL LEGACY

Women of color accounts for 80% of skin-lightening cosmetic sales in an 8.8 billion USD industry, reflecting embedded societal hierarchies that associate light-colored skin with status and beauty (Arora and Amin, 2024). The preference of having "fair" skin is a harmful cultural phenomenon that is a byproduct of colonial histories that position whiteness as superior. Decoloniality compels us to identify and deconstruct these lingering systems of oppression, recognising that the structures of colonialism shape subjective realities and reinforce inequalities long after the end of formal colonial rules (Deciancio, 2022). This essay considers how the devaluation of dark skin, colorism, symbolises colonialism and its intersections with capitalism (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018).

I have seen these subtle hierarchies in my household through my mother's use of skin- lightening products as a choice constructed by social narratives that associate lighter skin with beauty. This racist narrative persists as it is profitable. The decolonial project demands more than economic growth questioning who benefits from and what constitutes this economic growth. Decoloniality rethinks growth in ways that do not exploit or dehumanize, rather, affirms the dignity of all (Escobar, 2007). This essay will examine the concept of decoloniality and explore how these industries challenge the idea that all development is good. Then it will provide an example of decoloniality in practice.

UNDERSTANDING DECOLONIALITY

Simply, decolonising is undoing systems of oppression created by colonialism. However, through colonialist and inherently racist logics these systems persist, embedding themselves into modern economic, cultural and political structures of those who were colonized (Ndlovu-Gatsheni,

2020; Rutazibwa, 2020). Coloniality operates through what can be described as “the negation of other worlds of meaning” and the systematic destruction of indigenous ways of knowing and being (Deciancio, 2022). These are systems of domination and erasure that decoloniality resists.

Unlike the concept of postcoloniality, where colonial legacies within global structures are critiqued, decoloniality proposes an epistemic disruption. This disruption involves emphasising the epistemic south as a diverse, non-Eurocentric way of knowing, that historically has been marginalized (Escobar, 2007). Decoloniality is not a singular movement, capturing the struggles of women, indigenous peoples, racialized communities and those that have had to resist systemic oppression unique to their histories (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Therefore, the aim of decoloniality does not aspire to replace dominant epistemologies with others, it aims for a pluriversal coexistence of various epistemologies. Fanon (1968) writes “Let us decide not to imitate Europe” but instead “create a whole man” (p. 251), a call to action for liberation rooted in self-determination, a means of rejecting colonial systems of thought.

DECOLONIALITY, CAPITALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Decoloniality identifies capitalism as a neo-colonial force, perpetuating exploitation. The global economic system continues as a reflection of colonial hierarchies which is particularly true in the Global South where Western dominance is sustained by “abyssal thinking”, dividing the world into a "zone of being" and a "zone of non-being”, with the latter being the site of exploitation inhabited by victims of colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p.35). Through a decolonial lens, the skin-lightening industry can not just be perceived as a neutral market product, but one that reinforces negative colonial systems of thought that are cultural and social, that in turn create an exploitable consumer.

Additionally, while commerce in developing, postcolonial economies is important for mitigating the lasting economic detriments of colonialism, not all forms of development are decolonial, as some perpetuate the same extractive systems established during colonial rule (Deciancio, 2022). Colorism may seem far removed from economic development from a classical perspective, but if capitalism and colonialism are understood as co-evolved structures, how economic exploitation is dependent on and reinforces cultural and social biases must be examined. Decolonial development

would not ignore economic needs but would frame growth as a tool for dismantling hierarchies. Thus, decoloniality is able to challenge this by exposing unseen cultural violence behind Eurocentric beauty standards through grassroot initiatives that reclaim the narratives of the marginalized (Maldonado and Paneque, 2022).

DECOLONIALITY IN PRACTICE

The Dark is Beautiful campaign exemplifies decoloniality in practice. The 2009 initiative led by Indian NGO Women of Worth, was an attempt to celebrate beauty in all shades, rejecting the notion that fairness equals beauty (Abraham, 2018). The movement regards "the subject, her body, her community, her cosmogony as a locus of struggle" against hegemonic, modern epistemology that beauty lies in fairness of skin (Deciancio, 2022). Reflecting an act of self-affirmation that is a form of resistance against the “cognitive empire” that has historically devalued non-European bodies and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p.29).

By embracing self-affirmation, women of color can challenge the commodification of insecurities tied to the skin color and reclaim their natural beauty as celebrated. However, decolonial efforts must address economic drivers behind industries like skin lightening to avoid aiding a system it aims to dismantle. It should operate along with broader socio-economic reforms to disrupt the entrenchment of these exploitative systems fully. Nevertheless, the

movement’s decolonial critique of racialized beauty norms offers a first step to creating a transformative framework in resisting colonial logic.

CONCLUSION

The skin-lightening industry demonstrates how hierarchies of the colonial past persist through its exploitation of culture and economic systems. Normalized colorism and the commodification of insecurities highlight the systemic entrenchment of colonial narratives. With this knowledge on decoloniality, I would sit with my mother and tell her she is beautiful not

because society permits it but because she exists in all her complexity and worth. For a long time, I saw my mother's use of lightening products as harmless, even normal, failing to see the larger forces that shape it. I see now that these choices are not entirely her own as we have been conditioned by a system that demands conformity. As decoloniality is about recognising struggles and survival strategies that emerge under them, my mother's story is not about compliance but of resilience. She and like other women of color did what they believed was necessary to exist in a world that did not affirm their natural selves.

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ESSAY 2: REIMAGINING CUSTOMARY LAW IN A DECOLONISED SOUTH AFRICA

By *Adenike Fapohunda.* GDP. South Africa and Nigeria.

The European game, as described by Frantz Fanon, is one in which European epistemology creates a coloniality of knowledge and reinforces European hegemony (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 1). This epistemology affects the entire way of life of the colonised. This hegemony is sustained not only by reinforcing the superiority of Europeans, but Eurocentric ways of societal organisation.

The law, which is central to the organisation of human relationships, has not been exempt from European epistemologies and hegemonies. This is evidenced by the fact that notwithstanding large-scale reforms of the South African legal system, Roman-Dutch and English law still inform the common law. This continuity of a colonial past is not without scrutiny, the position of European legal systems in contemporary African jurisprudence continues to be contentious. Even though the South African constitution has, subject to the bill of rights, given customary law full legal recognition (Ntlama, 2012), there is a perception that customary law is treated as subordinate to the common law (Diala, 2020). This claim has gained renewed traction recently when uMkhonto Wesizwe, a political party that won 12% of votes in the most recent South African election, campaigned on the promise that if elected, it would scrap the constitution and instil African customary law as the apex law (Reuters, 2024). This proposed undertaking was so popular because many Black people in South Africa today, especially those living in rural areas, still conduct many of their personal activities in accordance with customary law (Ndulo, 2011). These activities, specifically within the domain of marriage, inheritance, and land rights, are sometimes at odds with human rights frameworks (Ibid., p. 89).

Land reform has always been central to conversations about equity in post-apartheid South Africa due to legislation such as the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act of South Africa, which had broad reaching implications that stripped Black people of land. In fact, calls for the return of stolen land are recurrently central to any discourse surrounding decolonisation (Rutazibwa, 2020, p. 227). Post-apartheid South Africa has aimed to rectify the injustice of rural land theft by assigning far reaching land control rights to traditional leaders. In essence they aim to promulgate a range of legislation and policies that would give land rights to tribes that were primarily defined in apartheid

by empowering traditional leaders. The effect of this would be to create centralised control of land by a senior traditional leader who would hold it in trust for the community and make decisions pertaining to the affected land. If implemented, this form of land reform could emulate patterns of rural land ownership seen in rural United Kingdom where rural land ownership is largely vested in the trusts of landowners that previously constituted nobility (Evans, 2019); however, the difference would be an expectation that this land is managed on behalf of rural communities. The justification of such land control, however, is one that sees decolonisation as a process through which land ownership is transferred from white to Black ownership. This attempt at decolonisation eerily resembles an all too popular post-colonial condition in which the native elite seek to accumulate power that was once reserved for colonialists while reinforcing a colonial status quo (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 6). The devastating consequence of the allocation of such widespread powers to traditional leaders would be the exclusion of women, the impoverished, as well as queer people from access to rural land.

The reality of African customary law is that it is not without its faults – women have historically been excluded from land ownership and possession due to factors such as primogeniture, the death of their partners, since these practices were common even before colonialism. This state of affairs has been codified without the consideration that custom is always evolving. For instance, in rural areas all over South Africa there is now an increasing willingness to allocate portions of land to women (Moore and Himonga, 2018, p. 65). By returning to a precolonial past without critiquing it, we negate the progress that has been made in developing customary law by simply adapting the law to present conditions.

Further, South African customary law relies heavily on paternalism and often allows older men to take up leadership positions and ignore the opinions of the majority. This has caused a recent uptick in rural advocacy that seeks to demand that ownership and control of the land vests in communities themselves and not in tradition authorities. Communities are increasingly taking the state to court for attempting to promulgate legislation that increases the power of traditional leaders, arguing that this would allow them to further abuse their power and traverse the rights of community members (Legal Resources Centre, 2023). Rural communities are demanding that they are consulted and can actively consent outside of traditional structures (Pilane v. Pilane, 2013) and protesting the ability of traditional leaders to give consent on their behalf for the exploration of

mining on community land (Masutha, 2022, p. 9). Communities are reinforcing their agency and creating a future that is not defined by domination, whether it be colonial or by an African elite.

The significance of land as central in the understanding of colonial domination cannot be overstated. Land has historically been the primary means through which human agency was conferred; it was the colonial subject that could not codify and justify their possession of land (Rutazibwa, 2020, p. 227). The land question has always been a question of agency, and thus it is by rectifying this question and ensuring equitable land access for all that we may begin to forge a decolonial future in which dignity is restored to colonised peoples.

Thus, an understanding of land and the ownership and possession thereof is central to the question of decoloniality. In my experience as a lawyer working closely with rural communities, I often wondered why communities on the verge of eviction or dealing with the desecration of their land placed so much importance on how what was happening would affect the graves of their departed relatives. Perhaps it is these graves, the bodies of ancestors that testify to belonging, ownership, and dignity, that is and has always been inextricably tied to the land they inhabit. Perhaps the project of decoloniality is meaningless if post-colonial states do not accept that the people living in them are the creators of their own futures and in charge of their own destinies. If we are to imagine how communities may rely on precolonial frameworks, such as traditional leaders, in their rejection of colonialism, we may also imagine how they might adapt and adjust these frameworks to forge a decolonial future in which they accept and mourn the suffering of their ancestors but forge a dignified future.

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ESSAY 3: THE ROLE OF ABOLITIONIST DISCOURSES IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH-LED LIBERAL INTERNATIONALIST HEGEMONY IN 19TH-CENTURY BRAZIL

By Nina Hanbury. SJP. Brazil

In the early 19th century, the call for the abolition of slavery emerged as a central feature of Britain's diplomatic engagement with Brazil. Following the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which prohibited the slave trade for British ships and subjects, abolitionism became a norm of British foreign policy (dos Santos Cruz, 2007, p.6). After Brazil declared its independence from Portugal in 1822, abolition was made a condition for the diplomatic recognition of the new Brazilian state. Despite numerous bilateral treaties, efforts to halt the Brazilian slave trade over the next two decades had limited impact. Tellingly, the 1831 "Feijó Law" in Brazil – which declared all enslaved Africans entering Brazil from that date to be free – became known internally as a law "for the English to see" (Ashcroft, 2015). This expression, still used today, refers to measures enacted to give the appearance of compliance, but with no substantive effect. In response to this inaction, Britain escalated pressure by passing the British Aberdeen Act of 1845, authorizing the British Royal Navy to seize Brazilian vessels suspected of slaving, even in Brazilian territorial waters. The growing costs associated with slavery in this geopolitical context contributed to the passing of the Brazilian Eusébio de Queirós Law in 1850, which effectively outlawed the transatlantic slave trade. Up until the formal abolition of slavery in 1888, British actors in Brazil continued to advocate against the use of slave labour, often making the employment of free workers a condition for capital investment and commercial partnerships.

British involvement in 19th century anti-slavery efforts has frequently been invoked to present them as champions of liberal humanitarian values. The endurance of this ideological framing has hindered a deeper inquiry into the strategic role of abolitionist discourses in the ascendancy of British-backed industrial capitalism in Brazil. It is therefore important to note that despite its rhetorical alignment with liberal principles, these abolitionist measures did not translate into the dismantling of racial hierarchies in labour relations. On the contrary, they contributed to the reorganization of Brazil's labour regime in ways that excluded formerly enslaved populations from industrial employment and reaffirmed a racially stratified division of labour. Yet the portrayal of

Britain as a moral leader in the struggle against slavery has endured in both common sense and scholarly accounts of this period – obscuring the ways in which abolitionist ideas converged with the interests of an emergent British-led liberal international order. This essay will aim to analyse how the post-1850 transition away from plantation slavery to a wage labour regime in Brazil signalled the consolidation of British influence over the nascent process of industrialization in the region.

Within the field of International Relations (IR), the growing prominence of abolitionist discourses during this period has often been interpreted through two dominant lenses. On one hand, constructivist accounts, such as that of Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), frame abolition as part of a broader normative shift in the international system, driven by moral entrepreneurship and the internalisation of liberal values by states. By contrast, the neorealist conceptualization of "hegemonic stability" (Gilpin, 1987; Gilpin, 2001) instead centres the role of a dominant state in providing the conditions for a liberal international system – with liberal ideas serving as epiphenomenal tools in a power rivalry between nation-states. This essay will argue that neither framework adequately accounts for the recursive interaction between the normative dimension of the liberal international order and its corresponding material conditions. With a view to critiquing both liberal idealism and neorealist instrumentalism, we will draw on Cox's (1981) historical materialist framework, which foregrounds the dialectical interaction between ideas, institutions, and material power. A Coxian perspective will then be employed to interrogate the role of abolitionist discourses in the consolidation of the British-led liberal economic order, highlighting how normative claims were embedded within material processes of industrial expansion, imperial domination, and the racialized restructuring of labour.

To ground this theoretical intervention, the essay draws on the case of Paranapiacaba, a railway town constructed in the 1850s and 1860s by the British-owned São Paulo Railway Company (SPR), under a 90-year concession. Paranapiacaba was one of the earliest planned industrial towns in Brazil to be built entirely with free labour, in accordance with the SPR's contractual commitment to British abolitionist policy. While often celebrated as a symbol of industrial modernization, Paranapiacaba was also a site where liberal discourses of progress and abolition were operationalized through a racially exclusive wage-labour regime. Despite SPR's public commitment to free labour, Black workers were systematically excluded in favour of European

immigrants – effectively entrenching a racialized hierarchy of labour under the guise of juridical equality. Through this case study, this essay will trace how the normative defence of abolition was integral to the consolidation of liberal capitalist hegemony – an outcome that neither liberal idealism nor neorealist instrumentalism can fully account for.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST TAKE ON THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

Within mainstream International Relations (IR) scholarship, attempts to foreground the role of ideas and norms have often reproduced the liberal assumption that economic liberalism necessarily gives rise to political and moral progress. This form of liberal idealism is especially stark in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) constructivist interpretation of the abolition of slavery. According to the authors, for the phenomenon of slavery to be possible in the first place, slaveholders and non-slaveholders had to believe in the 'appropriateness' of the norm of slavery. Without this normative dimension, they posit, "the institution of slavery would not have been possible" (p.892). By extension, the abolition of slavery is understood as a shift in the logic of 'appropriateness' surrounding the institution of slavery. For the authors, "idea shifts, and norm shifts are the main vehicles for system transformation" (p.894). Transformation is theorized as a three-stage process: 1) norm emergence; 2) norm cascade; and 3) internalization. Within the initial stage of norm emergence, the authors acknowledge that norms "do not appear out of thin air" (p.896). But rather than theorizing a mutually constitutive relationship between ideas and their contextual material conditions, Finnemore and Sikkink attribute them to agents with "strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour in their community" (p.896). Even more starkly, norm emergence is attributed to "'transnational moral entrepreneurs' who engage in 'moral proselytism'" (p.897). The universal abolition of slavery is then specifically cited as evidence that "people with principled commitments have made significant changes in the political landscape" (p.916). In their haste to question the adequacy of a materialist ontology, the authors instead treat norms in a wholly idealist manner, as emanating from morally enlightened individuals motivated by the "empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment" (p.898).

In the second stage of norm diffusion, as theorized by Finnemore and Sikkink, the effective mobilization of ideas by 'norm entrepreneurs' within international institutions triggers a 'norm cascade': "an international or regional demonstration effect or 'contagion' (...) in which international and transnational norm influences become more important than domestic politics for effecting norm change" (p.902). The authors argue that the primary mechanism of the norm cascade is 'international socialization', aimed at inducing states into norm compliance. In regard to the British-led campaign for the abolition of the slave trade in the 19th century, this normative diffusion is understood as the fundamental motor in the internationalization of abolition. The tendency for powerful states to be the most successful in propagating international norms is explained by the authors not as evidence of a materialist grounding for these ideas, but as evidence that these states are "widely viewed as successful and desirable models" (p.906) within an international society of states. The metaphor of an 'international society' is taken by Finnemore and Sikkink to mean anthropomorphized state units who:

> "care about following norms associated with liberalism because being 'liberal states' is part of their identity in the sense of something they take pride in or from which they gain self-esteem" (p.904).

While there is something to be said about the prestige and soft power gained by conforming to hegemonic political norms and customs, this personification of state actors by reference to identity and self-esteem does little to grasp the complexity of the interaction between normative and material factors on a global scale.

The third stage of Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) account of norm diffusion refers to the process of internalization of transnational norms by states and other institutional actors, to the extent that these assume a 'taken-for-granted' status. In the course of their theorization, the authors refute the claim that "norms about issues congruent with capitalism and liberalism will be particularly powerful", arguing that "this formulation is too vague to be useful" (p.907). And yet, they go on to cite scholars who claim that 1) world culture is underpinned by five normative commitments to "universalism, individualism, voluntaristic authority, rational progress, and world citizenship"; 2) that there is a long-term trend toward humanizing the 'other,' or 'moral progress' which explains the abolition of slavery; 3) as well as Sikkink's own work suggesting that norms involving bodily integrity and legal equality of opportunity have particular transnational and cross-cultural resonance, and thus must have underpinned the success of abolitionist campaigns (p.907). While

Finnemore reserves skepticism towards the possibility of empirically substantiating teleological arguments about dominant global norms (p.909), she subsequently reaffirms her belief that the intrinsic characteristics of certain liberal norms necessarily lead to their greater transnational diffusion. Throughout their 1998 article, Finnemore and Sikkink treat the global abolition of slavery as evidence that a moral commitment to liberty and equality lay at the core of the liberal diffusion of abolitionist norms and their international uptake.

Yet the case of Paranapiacaba provides a compelling counterpoint to this idealist, normative treatment of abolitionist discourses. The railway town of Paranapiacaba was built in the second half of the 19th century by the British-owned São Paulo Railway Company (SPR), as part of a wider railway system connecting São Paulo's inland region to the port of Santos (dos Santos Cruz, 2007, p.xii). The construction of the railway marked a transition between the coffee-based economy of the early 19th century and the emergent railway-based, industrial economy. It also marked the consolidation of British influence in Brazil, whose investments of capital and technology were key in spearheading the industrialization process in the region (p.xv-xvi). As a company bound by British abolitionist laws, the SPR renounced the use of slave labour, committing itself "not to employ anyone other than free people in the construction of the railroad" (p.70, own translation). However, the push for abolition spearheaded by British industrial entrepreneurs in fact contributed to the almost complete exclusion of black workers from the nascent industrial economy. The construction of the railway in Paranapiacaba started with the hiring of five thousand free labourers. Daniel Mackinson Fox, the SPR's first Resident Chief Engineer, who was responsible for overseeing the construction of the railway line, was cited as saying that "the only craftsmen he could count on, for the quality of their work, would be foreigners, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and German immigrants", and emphasizing that it was essential to hire only English specialists for the technical matters of the railway (p.70, own translation). During the construction phase of the railway, between 1856 and 1867, the work force in Paranapiacaba consisted primarily of European immigrant labour. The openly racist hiring practices of British industrial elites were accompanied by a Brazilian state-backed initiative to promote European immigration throughout the second half of the 19th century. These immigrant labour schemes, which started with 'parceria' (sharecropping) and 'colonato' (settler–labourer system) arrangements, eventually gave way to a formal wage-labour regime (p.xvi). This racially selective provision of state-subsidized access to land, wages, and housing stood in stark contrast

to treatment of the nearly one million formerly enslaved black Brazilians who were formally freed by the Lei Áurea (Golden Law) in 1888, but who received no reparations or structural support. In this context, there developed in Brazil a normative association between skilled wage labour and whiteness which would continue to condition the wage labour regime in Brazil arguably until the present day.

The coexistence of openly racist hiring practices and purportedly abolitionist commitments to free labour provides a compelling lens through which to question the liberal idealism defended by scholars such as Finnemore and Sikkink. The positioning of the British-led campaign for abolition as a mark of the moral superiority of British 'norm entrepreneurs' lends itself instead to a deeply ideological defence of the liberal internationalism. The constructivist attempts to centre normative and affective considerations – when advanced through a wholly nonmaterialist account of ideas – amounts to little more than a moralistic rationalization of liberal hegemony, cloaked in the language of progress. In this way, Finnemore and Sikkink's normative account of abolition fails to "stand apart from the prevailing order and ask how that order came about" (Cox, 1981, p.88).

NEOREALIST HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY AND PAX BRITTANICA

Against an idealist treatment of norm diffusion, neorealist approaches in IR have focused on the instrumentality of ideas in securing a liberal international economy that serves the interests of a hegemonic state (Gilpin, 2001). For Gilpin, a noted neorealist theorist of 'hegemonic stability', a hegemon creates a liberal international economy primarily to promote its own political and security interests. From this perspective,

> "there can be no liberal international economy unless there is a leader that uses its resources and influence to establish and manage an international economy based on free trade, monetary stability, and freedom of capital movement" (p.99).

These liberal principles are regarded by Gilpin as public goods which can only be guaranteed through their enforcement by a hegemon at any given moment. The norms and rules of the liberal economic order, therefore, must be established and consistently maintained by a hegemonic power (Gilpin, 1987). Gilpin argues that the dynamics of the international economy cannot be reduced to

economic factors, because “once the nation-state exists, it behaves in accordance with the logics of the competitive state system” (p.85). At the heart of this theorization is the realist assumption that the international system is fundamentally characterized by an anarchic state system. As stated by the author, “nation-states and the conflicts among them are the foremost manifestation of man's nature as a ‘political animal’” (p.80). Within a (neo)realist formulation of hegemonic stability, the norms of the international system do not exercise causality in and of themselves; they are mobilized instrumentally by the hegemon in service of their own interests or those of their allies.

Approached through a neorealist lens, the promotion of abolitionist ideas by the British in mid-19th century Brazil would be interpreted not as a normative commitment, but as a strategic instrument for advancing British national interests. Within this framework, the geopolitical rivalry between Britain and Portugal over influence in Brazil takes on primary significance. It is important to note, therefore, that in the context of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the transferral of the Portuguese Crown to Brazil in 1807 was carried out with the protection of the British navy. In exchange for this protection, a number of privileges were granted to the British, including: the right to harvest timber from Brazilian forests for warship construction; unrestricted access for British warships to all ports within Portuguese territories; and significantly reduced customs duties, set at 15% compared to the 24% levied on other foreign traders (de Santos Cruz, 2007, p.3). The growing momentum of British commerce in Brazil can be viewed as a key factor in the intensification of their abolitionist foreign policy. As noted by Pantaleão (1985), Brazil’s continued use of enslaved labour enabled its agricultural products to be sold at lower prices, giving it a competitive advantage in European markets (cited in de Santos Cruz, 2007, p.5). Since the slave trade had already been abolished in British colonies, a reduction in the labour force and a rise in production costs were anticipated. Britain, therefore, found itself at a potential disadvantage in the global market. Following the independence of Brazil in 1822, Britain continued to treat the region as a sphere of strategic interest, using diplomatic recognition and the conditionality of anti-slavery commitments as tools to consolidate its political and economic hegemony. The term ‘Pax Britannica’, in particular, has been used by Gilpin to refer to the period of British hegemony during which liberal principles were strategically deployed in the creation of “a favourable international environment for the overseas expansion of British firms and investors in the late nineteenth century” (Gilpin, 2001, p.288). From a neorealist standpoint, the promotion of abolitionism as a norm of British foreign policy can be understood as a strategic move on the part of Britain in

consolidating its dominance within a competitive state system. The naval escalation of anti-slavery enforcement following the British Aberdeen Act of 1845 can thus be read as further evidence of Gilpin's argument that the stability of a liberal international economy depends on the hegemon's willingness to enforce its norms through material power.

While a neorealist reading of the relationship between geopolitical interests and abolitionist ideas goes further than liberal idealist perspectives in foregrounding strategic geopolitical factors, its purely instrumental treatment of ideas within the context of international anarchy remains analytically insufficient. In his noted 1981 article, Cox highlighted how the neorealist theory of hegemonic stability is grounded in ahistorical assumptions about 1) the nature of man; 2) the nature of states; and 3) the nature of the state system. On the level of the nature of man [sic], Cox pointed to the presumption of "a Hobbesian 'perpetual and restless desire for power after power that only ceaseth in death'" (p.92). The nature of states, in turn, was grounded in a particular notion of national interest as the guide to their action – one which does not vary greatly irrespective of their domestic constitutions or capacities. Lastly was the assumption that the state system is essentially characterized by the unbridled pursuit of rival national interests, which could be rationally constrained through the mechanism of the balance of power (p.92). This ahistorical conceptualization of the three levels of the international system, Cox argued, led to the neorealist belief in a 'common rationality' between competing actors, all of whom would be predisposed to appraising geopolitical stakes in a similar manner. Crucially, Cox argues that the neorealist exclusion of moral goals and focus on physical power relations provides only a superficial impression of being non-normative and 'value-free'. In fact, by assuming that "security within the postulated international system depends upon each of the major actors (...) adopting neorealist rationality as a guide to action", "the theory also performs a proselytizing function as the advocate of this form of rationality" (p.93).

HISTORICAL MATERIALIST CORRECTIONS TO NEOREALISM

Against what he identifies as an "ahistorical view of the framework for action" (1981, p. 91), Cox advances four historical materialist corrections to the neorealist theory of International Relations. On this basis, he offers a critical reconceptualization of hegemony in International Relations – one which foregrounds the recursive relationship between ideas, institutions, and

material forces. The first correction offered by historical materialism is a concern with dialectic, both on the level of logic and on the level of history. Regarding the level of logic, Cox emphasizes the continual confrontation between ideational concepts and the material realities they seek to represent, as well as their continual adjustment to a changing reality. At the level of history, "dialectic is the potential for alternative forms of development arising from the confrontation of opposed social forces in any concrete historical situation" (p.95). Through this critique, Cox emphasizes that ideational formations are in perpetual motion and necessarily rooted in, but not determined by, material social forces. In this sense, the Coxian framework provides a historical materialist revision of the nature of conflict. For neorealism, conflict is inherent to the human condition, rooted in the "power-seeking essence of human nature and taking the political form of a continual reshuffling of power among the players in a zero-sum game" (p.95). Historical materialism, in contrast, sees in conflict a process of "continual remaking of human nature and the creation of new patterns of social relations" (p.95). As such, conflict is conceived of as a generative force behind structural change. This approach to structural change provides a framework which grants a measure of causality to competing ideational conceptions, without relegating them to a nonmaterialist or structurally deterministic realm. This allows for the theorization of world order as a terrain of struggle shaped by changing relations of production and evolving ideational frameworks.

Secondly, Cox emphasizes how the historical materialist focus on imperialism "adds a vertical dimension of power to the horizontal dimension of rivalry among the most powerful states", the latter being the primary focus of neorealism (1981, pp. 95-96). This correction is particularly important to the present discussion, as the vertical dimension allows for a consideration of "the dominance and subordination of metropole over hinterland, centre over periphery, in a world political economy" (p.96).

The third correction proposed by Cox addresses the overly state-centric focus of neorealist theorization. According to the author, a neo-Gramscian historical materialist approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between state and civil society – one "which recognizes the efficacy of ethical and cultural sources of political action" (1981, p.96). This is juxtaposed with the limited treatment of civil society in neorealism, where it is acknowledged only insofar as it constrains the rational behaviour of states. But this articulation of civil society can

also be contrasted with the constructivist take, where the role of ethical and cultural dimensions is treated as constitutive of the very terrain of political action, rather than as causal forces shaped through their dialectical relationship with material conditions. In this way, neo-Gramscian historical materialism provides a non-reductive materialist account of the emergence and contestation of norms. By drawing on the work of Gramsci, Cox proposes that

> "the sense of a reciprocal relationship between structure (economic relations) and superstructure (the ethico-political sphere) (...) contains the potential for considering state/society complexes as the constituent entities of a world order" (p.96).

The final and perhaps most evident correction of historical materialism to neorealism is its focus on "the production process as a critical element in the explanation of the particular historical form taken by a state/society complex" (1981, p.96). In neorealism, by contrast, the production process is largely ignored. In doing so, "the production process and the power relations inherent to it" (p.96) are framed as an ahistorically given element of a state's national interest. The Coxian framework instead situates power in production alongside power in the state-civil society complex and power in international relations – thus providing for a more nuanced analysis of geopolitical dynamics. On the basis of these four fundamental critiques, Cox outlines what would later become his distinctive neo-Gramscian formulation of hegemony:

> "a coherent (...) fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order (including certain norms) and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality" (p.103).

PARANAPIACABA FROM A COXIAN HISTORICAL MATERIALIST LENS

Read from a Coxian historical materialist perspective, the propagation of abolitionist discourses in 19th century São Paulo can neither be reduced to an instrument of British hegemonic strategy, nor to the normative victory of liberal humanism. Rather, the growing consensus around the norms of juridical equality and wage labour must be understood as part of a broader material restructuring of Brazil's economy – from a system of plantation slavery towards an industrial capitalist labour regime.

In light of Cox's theorization of conflict and its role in structural transformation, the growing prevalence of liberal ideas surrounding abolition can be understood as one of the means through which the entry of British industrial capital into São Paulo gained legitimacy in opposition to agrarian elites associated with plantation slavery. Following British naval interventions against the transatlantic slave trade and its formal abolition in 1850, trafficking shifted from the West African coast to internal routes, with enslaved people forcibly relocated from the Northeast to the Southeast of Brazil (de Santos Cruz, 2007, p.27). This internal trade allowed coffee barons to prolong their dependence on slave labour for another few decades. However, the rising economic costs of slavery, coupled with the organized resistance and escapes by enslaved people, accelerated the shift from slave to wage labour in São Paulo. Abolitionist discourses, through their ideological association with racialized ideals of civilizational progress, paradoxically contributed to the restructuring of a new racial hierarchy of labour in Brazil – reinforced by the mass influx of European migrants in the latter half of the 19th century.

Given the central role of British capital in early Brazilian industrialization, Cox's addition of a 'vertical dimension of power' to the neorealist conception of inter-state competition is of particular importance. The construction of the São Paulo Railway, funded and operated by British investors, exemplified this vertical entanglement: the development of industrial infrastructure was not an expression of a unified national interest, but rather a part of Brazil's broader integration into a global division of labour conditioned by the hegemony of British capital. In this context, the expansion of railway infrastructure served to facilitate the circulation of coffee as a global commodity, physically linking inland production zones to international export markets and reinforcing the region's insertion into global commodity circuits. Attention to the vertical dimension of power also illuminates the shifting internal dynamics within Brazil at the time, as the economic centre of gravity moved from the Northeast – historically dependent on plantation sugar and the transatlantic slave trade – to the coffee-producing Southeast, where industrial capital increasingly shaped the conditions of accumulation. This greater attention to the multiple and diverging interests of different segments of both the state and of competing fractions of capital speaks to Cox's insistence on analyzing the state-civil society complex as a constitutive element of the world order, rather than treating the state as a unified actor within international relations

Finally, by centring the production process in his historical materialist analysis of international relations, Cox offers a dynamic framework for understanding the interplay between shifting relations of production and the social forces contesting capitalist hegemony. As he notes:

> "it is, of course, no great discovery to find that, viewed in the political economy perspective, the 'Pax Britannica' was based both on the ascendancy of manufacturing capitalism in the international exchange economy, of which Britain was the centre, and on the social and ideological power (...) of the class which drew its wealth from manufacturing" (1981, p.105).

While Cox refers specifically to the manufacturing classes in Britain and northwest Europe, this can be extended to the Brazilian elites who, in the second half of the 19th century, began to reorient their investments toward infrastructure and industry. In this context, the 'social and ideological power' of the manufacturing class became increasingly intertwined with the ideational construction of the favourability and superiority of the wage labour regime over that of slave labour.

CONCLUSION

This essay has examined the role of British abolitionist discourses in 19th-century Brazil through a Coxian historical materialist framework, challenging both liberal and realist accounts that isolate ideational dynamics from their material conditions. While constructivist approaches tend to present abolition as a normative shift driven by moral progress, and neorealist perspectives reduce it to the rational behaviour of unitary states, a dialectical approach foregrounds the historical processes through which liberal ideals were articulated within changing relations of production. By tracing the recursive relationship between material forces, institutions, and ideational formations, the essay has argued that abolitionist discourses contributed to the consolidation of a new hegemonic order shaped by the global expansion of industrial capital.

The case of Paranapiacaba illustrates how the norms of abolition and free labour, rather than universalizing liberal equality, functioned to reorganize racial hierarchies within the emerging wage-labour regime in Brazil. The principle of juridical equality became central to the ideological framing of this transition, legitimising exclusionary labour regimes under the guise of modernization and progress. The investment of British capital in Brazil's railway infrastructure, particularly through the São Paulo Railway Company, illustrates how abolitionist discourse

became articulated within a wider reordering of labour and production tied to export-led development. A Coxian approach foregrounds how these transformations were shaped by the interaction of competing class interests – both domestic and transnational – and how liberal norms took on hegemonic force as they became embedded in institutional arrangements that supported emergent forms of capital accumulation. Abolitionist discourses, in this sense, served to legitimize the restructuring of Brazil's racialized division of labour as part of the growing hegemony of a British-led liberal international order.

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ESSAY 4: WHY IS THIS PAPER WRITTEN IN ENGLISH?: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LINGUISTIC HEGEMONY AS PROCESS AND AS CONCEPT THROUGH A COMPARATIVE APPROACH OF NEO-GRAMSCIAN AND BOURDIEUSIAN THEORY.

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INTRODUCTION

At the International Institute of Social Studies, the official language of all study programmes is English, despite being located in the Netherlands where English is not an official language. Globally, English is becoming increasingly adopted as a primary language of business, education, and entertainment. A 2021 study by the British Council found that almost one fifth of all English-taught programmes are now located outside of the 'primary' English-speaking countries, those being the U.K., the U.S., Australia, or Canada (Mitchell, 2021). Beyond that, it is the Chinese and Sub-Saharan African regions that have seen the fastest percentage growth rate of English-taught programmes since 2017, rather than the previous trends of predominantly European countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark (Mitchell 2021). Stated otherwise, English can potentially be described as the lingua franca of the modern day, being considered by some as a global language which is not located in a fixed territorial, cultural, and social function (Cogo, 2016). A field of research–English as a Lingua France, or 'ELF'–has developed as a consequence of this phenomenon (Cogo, 2016). English is the third most spoken native language in the world, and represents the official language spoken of many industrialised democracies–making it highly significant in economic contexts (Gazzola, 2023). This status can be seen as an example of increasing global linguistic hegemony of the English language. Given this, it is prudent to examine the veracity of the claim that there exists linguistic domination of English, and in doing so question the notion of hegemony as equivalent to linguistic domination. In order to do so, this paper utilises concepts of Neo-Gramscian hegemony and Bourdieusian domination to examine English as an example of linguistic domination.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In order to examine this phenomenon, it is necessary to provide a specific definition of linguistic hegemony that will be used within this paper. “Linguistic hegemony has been identified and defined as what is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norms and usage as standard or paradigmatic” (Mustapha, 2014). This definition follows a Neo-Gramscian framework, one that includes both consensus between groups, and intentionality granted to the dominant group on the part of that consensus. Phrased differently, hegemony is established through leadership without force, including via processes of legitimization and consensual rule (Mustapha, 2014). Other definitions exist, with some including that not only does a certain language have to be standard, but it must also be seen as superior to other languages, potentially to the point of eradicating the use of other minority languages (Suarez 2002, cited in Mustapha, 2014). In the context of everyday practices, this is exemplified through actions such as the association of “linguistic minorities with inferiority, lower self-esteem, and belittlement” (Suarez, 2002, p. 514, cited in Mustapha, 2014). The dominated group internalises and accepts that they are subordinate to the dominating group, viewing it as ‘common sense’, even if this may not be in their best interests (Tietze and Dick, 2012, cited in Mustapha, 2014).

Within the literature, this term is also at times used to refer to either internal (or domestic) or international linguistic hegemony. The former is more so used when referring to ‘English-only’ policies of countries where English is an official language, such as the U.S. (Silverstein, 1998). Also known as the monoglot ‘standard,’ this understanding of hegemony refers to the understanding of one language, and one dialect of that language, as being superior and with practices that are institutionally mandated (Silverstein, 1998). Within the U.S., this linguistic hegemony of American monoglot Standard English is formally seen as superior yet simultaneously seen as an absence of ‘dialect,’ considered natural and not imbued with normative or sociocultural attributes (Silverstein, 1998). In a different context, international linguistic hegemony refers to a form of ‘language supremacy,’ where a language is generally accepted as superior to others, and where other languages are marginalised (Al-Kahtany and Alhamami, 2022). This form of linguistic hegemony is sometimes described as linguistic imperialism or linguistic colonialism, where there is an informal understanding that there is an intentional attempt to eradicate a minority language for the purposes of gaining power (Al-Kahtany and Alhamami, 2022). Al-Kahtany and Alhamami

(2022) argue that EMI policies that prioritise English speaking in non-Anglophone countries are a form of this linguistic imperialism, where there is a belief that English programmes are superior to ones taught in the native language of a country. Having established the distinction between these forms of linguistic hegemony, the understanding used in this analysis is one that is the union of these forms, where linguistic hegemony encompasses domestic and international, formal, and informal, ideals of linguistic superiority.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Thus the question examined within this paper is how can it be argued that there exists a linguistic hegemony of English-speaking states globally, and what can be revealed about the notion of linguistic hegemony when examined critically? This research question is important to investigate because of the relational way linguistic hegemony may affect the lives of people in ways beyond language. Returning to the increasing use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in non-anglophone countries, it is important to study linguistic hegemony as some studies indicate that EMI policies have adverse effects on education for students, "such as low achievement of learning outcomes, challenges to students' identity, limited access to educational resources, unjust treatments, and unfair assessment in undergraduate programs" (Al-Kahtany and Alhamami, 2022, p.18). Linguistic domination has real consequences for the people facing it, and as a process has the potential to affect large groups of people significantly negatively. Beyond the importance of accurately understanding linguistic domination as a process, being able to understand linguistic domination can contribute to further research regarding linguistics and the complex forms of social power and contemporary imperialistic processes that exist today.

HISTORICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF ENGLISH 'LINGUISTIC HEGEMONY'

Supposing that the situation in the modern day can be described as linguistic hegemony of the English language, it is prudent to examine the proposed timelines of the historic development of English linguistic hegemony. It can be argued that the beginning of English linguistic hegemony can be placed in the 16th century with British colonial exploration and exploitation (Kennedy 2017, cited in Zeng and Yang, 2024). Setting the stage for England's maritime domination, this began Britain's imperialistic movements. Scholars of hegemony argue that Britain employed English language deliberately "as a strategy to centralize authority within colonial areas, resulting in the subordination of indigenous people and fostering a perception of inadequacy towards their languages and traditions" (Zeng and Yang, 2024). This argument includes both internal and international linguistic hegemony, where English is forcibly instated as the official language of a country, and that English is normatively a superior language compared to the Indigenous languages of the places colonized by Britain. In this way, the linguistic hegemony can be associated with the relations of power in English colonial history of domination.

Being at the forefront of the Industrial revolution, Britain continued to gain notable economic influence in the 18th century (Barr et al., 2025). By the 19th century, Britain had the greatest economy globally, informing the language of trade and business. English became institutionalized across various continents as the British Empire developed, solidifying the role of English in many countries (Zeng and Yang, 2024). This continuous development changed in the era post-World War II, where the United Kingdom succeeded militarily but faced significant losses in its manufacturing sector (Barr et al., 2025). Recovery in the postwar period required almost 40 years for the British economy to see significant improvements in its competitiveness (Barr et al., 2025). British colonial status changed, with the United States overtaking the role of the United Kingdom as an economic and political superpower (Kramer, 2016, cited in Zeng and Yang, 2024). Similarly to Britain in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th century is also considered as intentionally advancing the English language globally as a global dissemination of cultural and political principles, according to scholars of hegemony (Zeng and Yang, 2024).

Technological advancements in the late 20th century introduced the internet, where primarily English-based media further continued to spread the English language globally (Zeng and Yang, 2024). By the 21st century, English becomes "solidified as the lingua franca of business, science,

aviation, and diplomacy" (Zeng and Yang 2024, p.4). Globally, educational policies shifted to prioritise language learning, where English as a Second Language, or 'ESL,' programs began to be increasingly popular as English became seen as a necessity for competition (Zeng and Yang, 2024). For some countries in Europe, English-taught programmes may have also been linguistically easier due to linguistic similarities to their native languages, making them more likely to provide programmes taught in English, compared to other popular languages such as Spanish or Mandarin (Truchot, 2002). In the present day, technological innovations in machine translation and AI leads to English holding an uncertain space in linguistic hegemony–translation may reduce the relative importance of learning and understanding English, or English hegemony may further be solidified as English-language tech platforms continue to dominate (Zeng and Yang, 2024). In this way, the role of language in society is heavily related to changes in culture, politics, economy, and technological innovation.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Delving into sociolinguistics, a perspective that goes against an understanding of English globalization as a form of domination is one that now posits English as an 'international' language–or EIL. In particular, this perspective is one that frames the discussion around the fact that of the now approximately 1.5 billion English speakers globally, non-native English speakers far outnumber native speakers. In a similar vein, there are a lot of discussions about English as the digital lingua franca (Bayyurt, 2013). The use of English as a common language on the internet has led partially to increasing numbers of people learning English as a second or foreign language (Gazzola, 2023; Zeng and Yang, 2024). From this, the notion of 'linguistic justice' has emerged, which is in regard to concerns over the uneven costs incurred by native and non-native speakers to communicate when English is the lingua franca of the internet (Gazzola, 2023). On the other hand, some scholars argue that English becoming a common language results in the decentralisation of linguistic authority (Bayyurt, 2013). As a result, for this theory, it becomes problematic to assume who has the authority to determine the norms and standards of English (Bayyurt, 2013). This theoretical background is used to make an argument for English education that includes English cultural content that is not restricted to societies that have English as their

native language–essentially, to include English cultural content from cultures that are not primarily anglophone (Bayyurt, 2013).

While this is relevant in assessing the degree to which it can be argued that there is a hegemony of the English language, this is not to say that this theory does not have its own problems. Notably this theory also carries a number of assumptions about the relationship between the number of people and the authority they carry–in reality, it could be argued that relations of power are much more complex than just being related to the number of people involved. While it makes a strong argument to be anti-reductionist in assuming authority does not come necessarily from those who originated the English language, it faces reductionism in a different way by arguing that this point can be determined by looking at how many English speakers in non-natively English countries there are. Given these limitations, it is necessary to examine both the phenomenon of linguistic hegemony, and the concept of linguistic hegemony itself through a more ontologically deep and critical perspective.

LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM AND ONTOLOGICAL POSITIONING

Regarding the topic of liberal internationalism, hegemony and the various theories surrounding it are frequently discussed within the context of international relations. As an example, the spread of liberalism can be associated with the ability of the United Kingdom to leverage hegemonic power to influence other states to accept the rise of liberal forces in the 19th century (Conte, 2025). The hegemonic state is understood to be a top-down structure, one that manufactures consent and that can restrict or enforce access to resources (Conte, 2025). Particularly, England and the U.S. are commonly cited as hegemonic powers, thus it is sagacious to examine the role of language in the potential maintenance of hegemonic power or of symbolic violence. In doing so, I will be examining the notion of hegemony through theories beyond that of international relations or political science and utilising sociological theories, particularly the theories centered on culture and communication. The theoretical framework predominantly used in this paper is that of Pierre Bourdieu, while using Neo-Gramscian concepts to examine the notion of hegemony and domination as consensual processes. As a result, when ontologically situating the theory used, the problematique is one of structuration (Knio, 2025). This is to say that through

structures, and as an outcome of structures, meanings are created. Human beings in this way are not the only constructors of meaning, but also the co-producers of knowledge with structures (Knio, 2025).

Bourdieusian and Gramscian Frameworks of Linguistic Domination

Bourdieu's relational theory of culture and stratification engaged with social phenomena in terms of the relationship between social entities, such as people, groups, and organisations (Bourdieu, 2000). As a result, any analysis of hegemony will necessarily use a vastly different approach to structural theories that examine entities, such as states, as the units of analysis in and of themselves. Since Bourdieu's approach is relational, it also means that any kind of capital has to be understood in relation to others, and in relation to other forms of capital, such as symbolic or cultural. It is important to mention that resources become capital only when they function as a social relation of power (DiMaggio, 1979). In this way, Hegemons also must be understood as always occupying a particular social space–or field–wherein values do not come from intrinsic properties but from the social space where they operate and their position related to other forms of capital. Thus, when analysing what we consider to be hegemony, Bourdieu can be used to examine the relational role of culture, symbols, and social power dynamics in the maintenance of hegemonic power.

EMI Policy, Capital, and Fields

EMI policy can be understood as an example of the attempted maintenance of English hegemony in the space of international education–and which can thus be used to compare the notions of Neo-Gramscian linguistic hegemony and Bourdieusian linguistic domination. When examining language, the different relations in education can be used to understand language in terms of multiple forms of capital, including cultural capital. Education can be framed as being simultaneously a field and a form of capital, as it is both a social space and a resource to be utilised in various other spaces. As a field, education may be described as a structured space configured around specific types of capital or combinations of capital. Fields are relational and oppositional,

where whatever position one has in a field is always related to the positions of others in the field (Bourdieu, 1979). Like with hegemony, Bourdieu argues that classes cannot be reduced to purely economic. They must include the cultural and consider the existence of divisions in all classes. Post-secondary education carries significant cultural capital, strongly affecting the degree to which individuals may be hired or considered as authorities. For Bourdieu, capital is an object of struggle for Bourdieu, a weapon used to improve one's position in a particular social space (DiMaggio, 1979). In a related vein, Bourdieu's cultural capital is embodied, institutionalised, and objectified (Bourdieu, 2000; DiMaggio, 1979). Education is institutionalised, which in turn allows it to be objectified through the form of credentials, while being embodied presumably through knowledge production. This is to say that education is both a site for, and an example of, capital, where EMI policy is representative of English linguistic violence through the leveraging of education as a field and as capital.

HABITUS AND THE AMERICAN FILM INDUSTRY

For Gramsci, hegemony is established through consent and persuasion, where leadership is cemented through legitimization (Mustapha, 2014). But Bourdieu questions the implied intentionality behind ideas of hegemony–how much of linguistic domination can be ascribed to intentional acts, and how much consent can be claimed on the part of the dominated? One of Bourdieu's major concepts is the habitus, described as the internalisation of class condition and its necessary conditioning. Habitus is below the level of consciousnesses, understood as being beyond introspection or will, an internalisation that grants a feeling that something is natural and taken for granted, yet affecting one's tastes and dispositions significantly (Bourdieu, 2000). "The agent engaged in practice … feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus, a virtue made of necessity which implies a form of love of necessity" (Bourdieu, 2000). If symbolic violence is to successfully take place, it requires that certain norms, values, and beliefs become so internalised that they become embodied within the habitus.

An example of the differences between hegemony and symbolic violence would be in terms of the symbolic power potentially granted through the U.S. film industry. An analysis that examines hegemonic power would likely find that the forces of Americanization and imperialism utilise the

American film industry as a tool of cultural dissemination (Chen, 2024). This hegemony can be ascribed to mechanisms such as the degree of resources consolidated within Hollywood, a distribution system that allows for significant control over the cultural distribution of films globally, and through cultural policies established by the American government that other countries also end up following (Chen, 2024). Author Jia Chen found that:

> Hollywood movies export American culture through two structures. The first structure is to embody the American spirit through film stories. The second structure is to magnify the personal hero myth … The hero will help people uphold justice … In the movie, issues such as rich and poor, class, race, all questions disappear. This is an act of deception; an illusion rooted in the audience's minds. Hollywood movies portray a beautiful dream and a perfect myth (Chen, 2024, p. 266)

Yet she also finds that while the American film industry exports U.S. culture globally successfully, it does not necessarily fundamentally alter international perceptions of the U.S. In the words of Bourdieu, the habitus is a "system of lasting, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, a keyway to understanding whether symbolic violence has, in fact, successfully taken place, is to analyse whether the supposed habitus can be transposed to different fields and yet continues to function as a matrix altering perception, appreciation, and action. Thus a Bourdieusian analysis of the American film industry questions to what extent symbolic violence took place, considering that although there is supposed U.S. hegemony in the contemporary film industry, these cultural exports do not seem to result in changing perceptions of the U.S. within fields other than that of the film industry. Like with the example of the American film industry, general analyses of linguistic domination require that both the intentionality and internalisation of hegemony are called into question.

Critical Analysis of Intentionality and Internalisation in Linguistic Domination

Intentionality of Linguistic Domination

Firstly, it is necessary to question to what extent is Anglophone international linguistic hegemony intentionally constructed. Many theories of intentional linguistic hegemony are based on Robert Phillipson's 1992 book, 'Linguistic Imperialism'. In it, he discusses the ways English

was exported and consolidated globally as an instrument of foreign policy (Barrantes-Montero, 2018). For Phillipson, English language standards are a strategy of power and control, allowing Anglophone institutions to monopolise disseminating language learning, and subsequently a promise of modernization (Barrantes-Montero, 2018). One of these is the British Council, one of the few consolidated sources on the proliferation of the English language globally–which is emblematic of this monopolisation of linguistic knowledge. Both domestically and internationally, the English language has been enforced through policies that can be reasonably construed as deliberate.

> "Official languages serve both as media of instruction and as instructional and curricular goals of schooling in society, and thus function to promote both general and linguistic hegemony–and, therefore, social and cultural reproduction in society" (Reagan, 2018).

Within a Neo-Gramscian framework, and within a Bourdieusian framework, linguistic hegemony is understood with the assumption of language as carrying different degrees of legitimacies, and being able to leverage this legitimacy to attempt to gain political, economic, symbolic, and cultural capital (Reagan 2018). As a result, it is theoretically meaningful to accept the possibility that actors may deliberately act to gain power through the use of language. Ultimately, there are limited conclusions that can be made about whether or not hegemony is intentional. Still, there is a strong argument to be made about the presence of English linguistic domination as an intentional strategy of control, and thus for hegemony or symbolic violence.

INTERNALISATION OF LINGUISTIC DOMINATION

However, the other aspect of linguistic domination is the internalisation of norms and standards associated with English, and this is disputable. Here it is important to emphasise the relational approach once again, as it's not possible to generalise the extent of internalisation among entire populations. Particularly, English linguistic hegemony is experienced very differently in not only different nations, but also in different positions on social and cultural axes. In a paper on the experiences of English hegemony for American, Australian, and Slovenian students, author Demont-Heinrich (2012) found that the Slovenian students used a counter-hegemonic discourse, particularly when it came to the idea that learning English is a consensual choice–unlike the American students in the paper who were surprised by that discourse. Demont-Heinrich (2012)

argues that this is an example in which there is room for active agents to simultaneously consent to some parts of global hegemony while resisting others. In the frame of Bourdieusian sociology, this would be an argument for the fact that English symbolic violence hasn't completely taken place, as it is not internalised. In particular, there is evidence to demonstrate that linguistic minorities may participate in countermovements through the revitalization of local cultural identities and languages (Eriksen 1992). These forms of countermovements may paradoxically require that linguistic minorities assimilate culturally in order to achieve protections in society successfully, but this is not sufficient to say that individuals do so with the subconscious belief that English is superior, but rather that it may be more effective to achieve their goals in particular contexts, or fields (Eriksen 1992). While English language domination may be internalised within predominantly Anglophone countries such as the U.S., it is questionable whether that argument can be made about countries who do not have English as a native language.

CONCLUSION

Given this analysis, it remains questionable whether, in fact, linguistic domination has taken place. This is particularly relevant to questions regarding consent and intentionality in hegemonic domination. While there is evidence of attempted symbolic violence on the part of anglophone countries, the extent to which this symbolic violence has been internalised is questionable. In this way, there may be evidence of the necessary elements of 'hegemony', but this should not be interpreted to mean that there is necessarily linguistic domination, as the notion of hegemony itself holds significant assumptions about to what extent domination is intentionally imposed, and to what extent domination is consensually accepted. Having established that linguistic hegemony can be domestic or international, I examined the historical process by which it can be argued that there may be linguistic hegemony of the English language that began in 18th century. This historical process led to the contemporary state of linguistic disparity; wherein technological advancements are yet to be established regarding whether they undermine or reproduce the linguistic hegemony of English language globally. Through sociolinguistic analysis, we can thus assess English as a digital lingua franca. While this analysis brings into question the extent to which the English language is intentionally used as a tool of dominance, sociolinguistic analysis also carries assumptions about plurality as emblematic of authority.

Instead of this analysis, I then proposed a more ontologically deep approach, through the comparison of Neo-Gramscian approaches and Bourdieusian sociological approaches as analytical and conceptual frameworks to examine English language domination. Through the use of Bourdieusian concepts such as field, capital, and habitus, linguistic domination was analysed domestically and internationally–particularly through examples in the United States regarding case studies of EMI policy and the American film industry. Having conducted that analysis, the Neo-Gramscian concept of linguistic hegemony was then critically examined through the concepts of intentionality and internalisation. While there can be an argument made about the intentionality behind English linguistic domination as a strategy of colonialism and imperialism, the internalisation of English linguistic domination is highly questionable. Through a Bourdieusian analysis, the superiority of the English language is not internalised within individuals globally on the subconscious level, particularly in cases where countermovements to English hegemony are taking place. As a result, while there may be evidence of intended linguistic domination of the English language, there are insufficient arguments to conclude that English hegemony is internalised globally.

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ESSAY 5: INCORPORATING THE PERSPECTIVES OF NON-WESTERN DONORS TO DYNAMIC OF DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S AID PHILOSOPHY AND ITS POTENTIAL APPLICATION

By Nodoka Niiyama. GMD. Japan.

The post-development theory critically stresses the conventional development theory as "a Eurocentric and hierarchic construct defining non-Western, non-modern, non-industrialised ways of life as inferior and in need of 'development'" (Ziai, 2017). It proposes an 'alternative to development' approach, which redefines people's own needs and sovereign lifestyles by often drawing on indigenous and traditional concepts and practices (ibid.). This perspective seems to shed new light on various societies at first glance, however, systematised development studies, including post-development schools, often overlook diverse experiences and agencies of non-Western societies that have played roles both as donors and recipients of international development cooperation. This essay aims to explore this point by referring to Japan's aid philosophy particularly exemplified by its legal technical cooperation with neighbouring Asian nations. The nuance of its philosophy aligns with some key aspects of post-development theory, but its impact on mainstream development discourse seems somewhat limited.

Since joining the Colombo Plan in 1954, Japan's aid initiative has rapidly expanded and diversified over the last 70 years, establishing its reputation as one of the top donors since the 1990s (MOFA, 2024). With a historical background of seeking modernisation under the fear of Western power faced in the late 19th century and critical self-discipline towards imperial occupation in neighbouring countries in Asia during wartime, Japan has developed its own aid philosophy. Seeking to demonstrate its respect for the agency and 'self-help' initiative of recipient societies based on a request-based principle. A policy of passively waiting for aid requests from recipient countries (Arase, 2005, p. 117). Among various development projects, one evident example that particularly reflects this philosophy is legal technical cooperation, operated by the Ministry of Justice of Japan (MOJJ) in cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japanese legal experts since the mid-1990s, upon request by recipient countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Indonesia.

In concrete, this cooperation involves drafting an amendment of laws and regulations, strengthening the functions of legal/judicial institutions, and capacity-building of legal professionals (Ministry of Justice, 2024). In general, the efforts to assist the development of the legal system can be a complex and potentially risky initiative depending on the power dynamics and way of donor-recipient communication. Since the legal system is a foundation of social systems often reflecting political and cultural orientation, there may be a concern that these efforts could involve the intention of imposing the donor's existing legal system. Kaneko (2010) observes that the transplantation of Western best practices to other regions, often facilitated by international development agencies, has been justified under the concept of 'convergence' among legal systems; leading to defining what is regarded as 'international best practice' (Kaneko, 2010, p. 6883). In other words, such an insensitive attitude reflects a Western ethnocentric mindset, which also aligns with the strong criticisms of conventional development discourse by post-development theorists. In comparison, Japan-led legal technical cooperation, as articulated by the Ministry of Justice and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), focuses on providing support without imposing its legal system. This method is designed to be tailored to meet the local needs through ongoing dialogue with the recipient country (Teramura, 2021, p. 32). Uchida (2024) also highlights that the foundation of effective legal technical cooperation lies in developing the legal interpretation theory of recipient societies because the fact that a legal code was drafted with assistance by a foreign country does not guarantee its immediate applicability within the local context (ibid., p. 2).

The distinction of Japan's aid philosophy from that of other international donors is rooted in its own development experience in the process of modernisation. In the late 19th century, facing the fear of being colonised by the Western powers, Japan implemented a policy known as Meiji Restoration, to transform from the traditional Shogunate system to the modern nation-state system. Indeed, this process was not a complete Westernisation; instead, it is generally understood as an effort to introduce Western-oriented social systems and norms to interpret and customise to fit Japanese society. To facilitate this policy, Japan invited foreign experts called *oyatoi-gaikokujin*, which is translated to 'hired foreigners' in English (Kawachi, 2013, p. 8). This term implies that, unlike the colonisation process where the dominant power led the development, Japan took the initiative to 'hire' foreign experts. For the establishment of a modern legal system, for example, French and German legal experts stayed in Japan hired by the MOJJ and worked on the compilation

of the legal codes, including the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the old Civil Code (MOJJ, 2024). During this time, Japanese legal experts faced challenges in understanding Western-originated legal concepts rooted in Roman law and Latin, as such basic concepts did not exist in the Japanese language (Uchida, 2024, p. 3). Fundamental ideas, such as 'contract', 'claims', and 'rights', did not have direct equivalents in the Japanese language, however, they interpreted those concepts by adapting them to the existing Japanese vocabulary and finding reference to the vocabulary of Chinese studies to facilitate the development of legal terms (Uchida, 2024, p. 12).

While many societies share the influences of Westernisation and (de-)colonisation in their development trajectories, the real process of development involves incorporating what is introduced from abroad to local contexts by adding its own interpretation. Kawachi (2013) defines this interactive process as "a multilayered cross-cultural project delivered from different world perspectives to local beneficiaries" (ibid., p. 3). Therefore, a dichotomous discussion of conventional development theory versus post-development theory is insufficient to address the nuance of such diverse experiences. It is important to note that Japan's experience referred to in this essay should not be simply understood as a heterogeneous example of a minor country. Rather, such development discourse can be generalized to other societies too, because an increasing number of non-Western societies such as Thailand and Indonesia, are transitioning from aid recipients to emerging donors of development projects. To further diversify development discourses by reflecting agencies of non-Western societies, it is essential to continuously gather the insights of those who navigated both roles of recipient and donor.

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ESSAY 6: POST-DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE AT INSTITUTE AT THE INSTITUTE OF ALTERNATIVES LADAKH

By Uma Ramachandran. SJP. United Kingdom

POST-DEVELOPMENT

A key motivator for pursuing this MA was realising that dominant understandings of 'development', and the institutions that disseminate such narratives, are not viable. They are often more harmful than helpful, actively exacerbating existing power imbalances. Eager to explore alternative paradigms, I struggled to articulate these ideas, let alone envision their practical application.

The post-development discourse, as explored by Escobar (2007), fortunately equipped me with the language to dissect conventional notions of development and directed me towards the perspectives I was seeking. Post-development emerged as critique to the historical and institutionalised discourse of 'development', emphasising the need to break away from Eurocentric thinking and binary ideals of 'progress' that dictate who is 'developed' and who is 'underdeveloped'. It advocates for a plurality of knowledges, particularly located in grassroots thinking and social movements. It looks to give salience to those voices that have been marginalised, 'those who are supposed to be the 'objects' of development so that they can become subjects of their own right' (ibid., p. 21). It recognises that the challenges 'development' addresses are not limited to politics and economics, but must also encompass emotional, spiritual and cultural dimensions. In short, post-development discourse is 'the unmaking of development through the intervention of new narratives, new ways of thinking and doing' (Escobar, 2007 in Harcourt, 2017, p. 4). I quickly realised I had already witnessed an incredible example of post-development in practice.

THE HIMALAYAN INSTITUTE OF ALTERNATIVES, LADAKH (HIAL)

Last year, while trekking in the Indian Himalayas (and incidentally drafting my application to ISS), I made a friend working at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (HIAL), who introduced me to their groundbreaking research addressing challenges caused by climate change.

Lying at an altitude of over 3,000m and known as the 'land of high passes', Ladakh is a sparsely populated region of 300,000 people. Until the late 20th century, Ladakh remained relatively undisturbed by globalisation, but rapid growth in recent decades have seen significant changes. Norberg-Hodge's (1992) anthropological research illustrates the detrimental effects of Western modernisation on Ladakhi interconnectedness to the natural world. Even the Dalai Lama (1999 in Buser, 2024, p. 99) highlights their unique 'inner development, a sense of warm-heartedness and contentment, that we would all do well to emulate'. The Ladakhi people's symbiotic relationship with nature means they are extremely vulnerable to a rapidly shifting climate, which is disrupting lifestyles and causing mass displacement. In short, 'climate change, development, tourism and geopolitical conflict interconnect in Ladakh and threaten ways of life that have been in place for centuries' (Buser, 2024, p. 90).

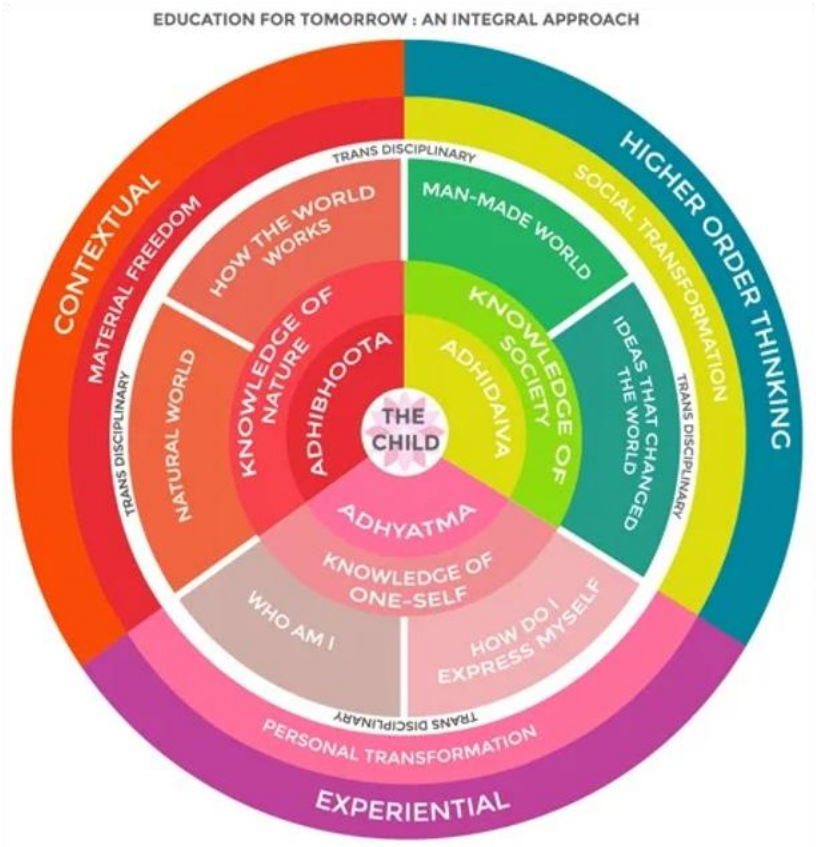

Figure 1: Education for tomorrow: an integral approach (Modified from source: HIAL, 2024)

However, many are already developing innovative solutions to mitigate these effects, and spearheading efforts is HIAL. Founded by Sonam Wangchuk, HIAL is grounded in a philosophy of alternative education and traditional knowledge (HIAL, 2024). Unlike Western thought based in Enlightenment ideals of rationality, progress, secularism and individualism, HIAL's approach is rooted in ancient Vedic principles of *adhibhuta* (material existence), *adhidaiva* (the divine), and *adhyatma* (the self or inner spiritual). This has expanded into an institute driven by experiential learning, collaborative teaching, and creative, trans-disciplinary approaches to tackle community problems (*Figure 1*). HIAL emphasises contextual education informed by the surrounding environment and indigenous wisdom. They foster continuous 'intercultural dialogue' where scientific researchers recognise knowledge forms embedded in traditional practices, aligning with the 'hybrid discipline' of agroecology (Toledo, 2019, p. 87).

ICE STUPAS

Many criticise post-development's tendency to romanticise the traditional, presenting it as inherently unproblematic while overlooking the complexities faced by these communities (Escobar, 2007, p. 21). Such nostalgia can overshadow legitimate desires for modernisation, technological advancements and economic development. In the same book, the Dalai Lama (1999 in Buser, 2024, p. 99) notes, 'no matter how attractive a traditional rural society may seem, its people cannot be denied the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of modern development'. Mirroring Arce and Long's (2000 in Escobar, 2007, p. 24) project of pluralising modernity, HIAL creatively incorporates technology with indigenous knowledge and practices, resulting in a 'hybrid proposal'. This is exemplified in their research on ice stupa automation.

Figure 2: Ice stupa (Source: HIAL, 2024)

Ladakh is a high-altitude, cold desert where glacier meltwater is the primary water source for drinking, agriculture and irrigation (Buser, 2024, p. 95). Rising temperatures are causing glaciers to melt at an accelerated rate, leading to severe water shortages. The construction of ice stupas is a famous Ladakhi practice offering an ingenious solution in response. These artificial glaciers are made by pumping water into the air which freezes into stalagmite-shaped structures, resembling Buddhist monuments called stupas (*Figure 2*). They gradually melt as temperatures rise, providing a reliable water source during dry seasons (HIAL, 2024). Stupas have long been celebrated as an indigenous, small-scale response to water security challenges in the Himalayas and beyond, though their long-term feasibility remains uncertain (Buser, 2024, p. 103).

Therefore, HIAL have been exploring automation to optimise the process; to help 'control the flow of water, ensuring precise distribution and optimal conditions for ice formation' (ibid.) For example, it diverts water if temperatures are too low to prevent pipes from freezing. Advanced monitoring technology also tracks weather patterns and water levels in real-time, so adjustments can be made promptly (ibid.). By integrating modern technology to Ladakh's 'rich history of community- based water conservation and management,' HIAL is creating a sustainable, scalable solution for water security (Buser, 2024, p. 101).

CONCLUSION

Further research into HIAL's work, through the lens of post-development discourse, has been enlightening. It made tangible the types of solutions to aspire to – ones that incorporate a plurality of knowledge, avoiding the trap of the binary of traditional/modern thinking. By harnessing the power of science and innovation along with indigenous knowledge, these solutions empower local communities to take ownership of technology and adapt it to their needs. HIAL's holistic approach exemplifies how such collaborative efforts can create sustainable, community-driven solutions to the climate crisis.

FIGURES

HIAL (2024). *Education for tomorrow: an integral approach* [Diagram]. Available at: https://hial.edu.in/ourphilosophy [Accessed 9 Jan. 2025].

HIAL (2024). *Ice stupa automation* [Photograph]. Available at: https://hial.edu.in/isautomation [Accessed 9 Jan. 2025].

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