GLOBAL DIALOGUE

13.3

3 issues a year in multiple languages

Talking Sociology
with Rita Segato

Breno Bringel
Vitória Gonzalez

Spotlight on the ISA

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> **The Politics of Fear and the**
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> **Water Struggles as Resistance**
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> Editorial

This issue begins with an interview with the renowned feminist academic and activist Rita Segato. During the conversation, we discuss her contributions on issues of gender, violence and coloniality and how to enhance South-South and global dialogues on these issues. Here Segato also shares her views on contemporary topics, such as authoritarian setbacks and the internationalisation of the feminist movement.

The ISA gains a special section in this issue. After 40 years of intense dedication to our association as its Executive Secretary, Izabela Barlinska retires. Five former presidents (Margaret Archer, Michel Wieviorka, Michael Burawoy, Margaret Abraham and Sari Hanafi) and the current one (Geoffrey Pleyers), recently elected in Melbourne, pay a well-deserved tribute to her. We also publish Pleyers' installation speech at the XX World Congress of Sociology. The sad note is the death of Margaret Archer, to whom Martin Albrow pays a personal tribute.

In addition to this institutional section, this issue features two symposia. The first, entitled 'The world according to critical theory (and vice versa)', organised by Stephan Lessenich and Estaban Torres, joins the current balance sheets on critical theory in the light of the centenary of the Institut für Sozialforschung (IfS). In the six articles in the section, Frankfurt School critical theory is questioned and revisited through different lenses: its relation to global sociology (Stephan Lessenich), postcolonial (Gurminder K. Bhambra) and decolonial criticism (Patricia Cipollitti Rodríguez), the globalisation of peripheral experience (Manuela Boatcă), the culture industry (Bruna de la Torre de Carvalho Lima), and a call for new critical theories of world society (Esteban Torres).

In the same spirit of grasping the global interconnectedness of social phenomena, the section 'Decarbonisation and Green Colonialism' explores the impacts of hegemonic ecological transitions in the Global South. Bringel and Svampa suggest that we are facing the emergence of a new capitalist consensus centred on the climate and environmental question, which they define as the "Decarbonisation Consensus". In turn, activists Hamza Hamouchène and Nnimmo Bassey analyse the green colonialism deriving from the energy transitions of the Global North from a North African and Pan-African perspective, respectively. At last, we publish the South-South Manifesto for a Just and Popular Ecosocial Transition written by activists, intellectuals and organisations from Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

In the section 'Theoretical Perspectives', Chilean sociologist Kathya Araujo calls for rethinking the theory of authority (and authoritarianism). After reviewing the classic models, she presents several societal transformations that have rendered them outdated. Araujo also offers us possible ways to rethink authority based on an interactive and relational approach.

Influenced by Araujo, the first article in the 'Open Section' by Lara Sartorio discusses how the politics of fear frames subjectivities and forges an authoritarian political imagination. Finally, Madelaine Moore presents some of the main findings of her book *Water Struggles as Resistance to Neoliberal Capitalism*, putting creatively the theory of social reproduction in dialogue with the politics of water.

We end the first year as *Global Dialogue*'s new editorial team, excited about the possibility of building bridges between audiences, cultures, places, and intellectual traditions. More to come next year. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue and help us spread the word in your language. ■

Breno Bringel, editor of *Global Dialogue*

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> *Global Dialogue* can be found in multiple languages at its website.

> Submissions should be sent to: globaldialogue.isa@gmail.com.

International Sociological Association

GLOBAL DIALOGUE

> Editorial Board

Rita Segato, an Argentinean writer, anthropologist, and feminist activist, reflects on coloniality and other crucial questions, enhancing dialogues from the Global South.
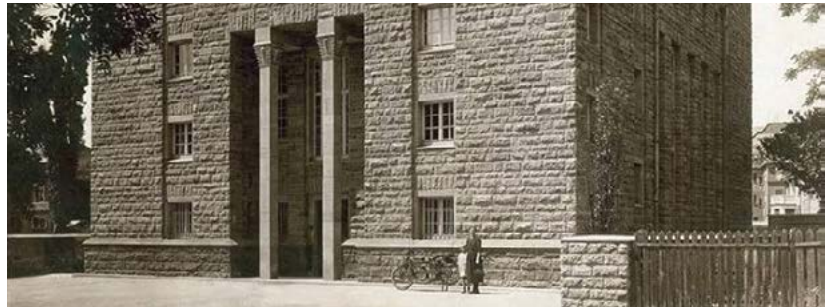
The 100th anniversary of the Institute of Social Research, and thus of the so-called Frankfurt School, is an opportunity to reflect on *critical theory* historically and nowadays.

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The *socio-ecological transition*, now a central focus of political and economic agenda, cannot be reduced to energy transition nor further exacerbate the inequalities between Global North and South.

Cover picture: Credit: iStock, 2021.

> In This Issue

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> "*Global sociology can neither remain rooted
in the Western universities and canons
that presented themselves as universal
nor be limited to criticism of this Western sociology*"

Geoffrey Pleyers

> Beyond Minoritisation and Coloniality:

An Interview with Rita Segato

Credit: Beto Monteiro / Secom UnB.

Rita Segato is a prestigious Argentinean writer, anthropologist, and feminist activist. She is Emeritus Professor at the University of Brasilia and has received, in recent years, almost a dozen degrees honoris causa from European and Latin American universities as well as several other important awards. These include the Frantz Fanon Award from the Caribbean Association of Philosophy for her life's work (2021) and Outstanding Personality of Culture from the Buenos Aires City Council (2019). She also holds the Rita Segato Chair in 'Unsettling Thought' at the National University of San Martín and the Aníbal Quijano Chair at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid. In addition to a distinguished academic career and innovative research on diverse topics such as race, ethnicity, nation, religion, gender, violence, and coloniality, she has made a vast contribution to human rights. For instance, she is co-author of the first affirmative action proposal to guarantee the entry of Black and indigenous students into higher education in Brazil (1999). She has also collaborated with various women's organisations in Latin America and is an essential reference for the feminist movement. She recently published in English her book The Critique of Coloniality (Routledge, 2022). In September 2023, Rita Segato was interviewed by **Breno Bringel** and **Vitória Gonzalez**, editors of Global Dialogue.

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Breno Bringel and Vitória Gonzalez (BB & VG): Your work and trajectory have been recognised recently worldwide. However, we believe that our readers from various parts of the world – such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East and even some regions of Europe – still need to get to know your work. How do you think your research contributions, primarily focused on Latin America, can be relevant in other contexts? How can it help boost global dialogues from the Global South?

Rita Segato (RS): Unfortunately, the major hub for the circulation of ideas is still the United States. The filtering of what is worth buying passes through the USA, and it is to this filter that most academic communities turn to see what is worth reading, which has been endorsed by the Global North's screening. Validation comes from there, and that's one of the empire's tasks. On the other hand, there's a lot of talk about the circulation of ideas in the universe of the Global South. I'm sorry, but I don't believe in this self-imposed confinement. I feel closer to the masterful Peruvian thinker Aníbal Quijano, who said that, despite being from the South, he didn't think about the South or for the South but for the world. The still colonial structure of the world is a planetary problem, and the need to consider and abolish it is also a global issue.

Regarding my work, I wish I could meet more African, Caribbean, Asian and Middle Eastern authors researching contemporary issues. Virtuality has opened up this possibility, although it hasn't been fully utilised, and it's still not the same as co-presence and co-corporality. But even if we think about dialogue with authors from the former colonies, we must always do so with fidelity to the idea that we are thinking and writing for the world. This way of thinking converges in my critique of minoritisation, i.e., the criticism of the place that multiculturalism gives to the 'others' in relation to the ontologically full subjects: women, Indians, Blacks, dissident sexualities, etc.

In my perspective, this place of political minority that thinks from itself, about itself and for itself must be destroyed. For example, if we, women, get to advance in our proposals, if patriarchy breaks down and decomposes, all powers' towers are destabilised, and our antagonists know this very well. It's because of the danger we represent that they put their flocks in the streets repeating nonsense like, for example, that 'gender' – which is an analytical category capable of accounting for the variety of cultural constructions of what a man and a woman are – is an 'ideology'. These flocks placed in the streets to repeat slogans without understanding them are irrefutable proof of the extent to which the underestimated 'minorities' touch and threaten the world's unequal structure.

BB & VG: If we could translate into all the languages of our magazine one of your works that has yet to be internationally disseminated, which would you recommend? Why?

RS: That's a complicated question. The author never knows. It's also tricky to answer because some of my texts address patriarchal oppression, others address racial oppression, and others the difference between 'politics' and 'the political' (in other words, my critique of the capture of the political by the state). Many essays are now in the form of interviews and even video recordings. I talk more and more and write less and less due to the effects of age and the urgency to make myself understood.

But in my penultimate book, titled *Cenas de um pensamento incômodo* (Scenes of Unsettling Thought), published in 2022 in Portuguese and in 2023 in Spanish, there are two lesser-known texts: "Refundar o feminismo para refundar a política" (Reinventing feminism to reinvent politics) and "Nenhum patriarcão fará a revolução: reflexões sobre as relações entre capitalismo e patriarcado" (No patriarch-boss will make the revolution: reflections on the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy). In my latest book, published in Spanish in Chile, titled *Expuesta a la muerte* (Exposed to Death), the very short preface "Encomio de la incertidumbre" (In Praise of Uncertainty) expresses my ideas very well.

There is also a book that is the foundation of all subsequent developments in my thinking. Although more recent ones have been or are being translated into English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, and even Greek, this one hasn't had the same luck: *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia* (The Elementary Structures of Violence). In this work, a key chapter, and a platform for everything I have thought about since, is "La estrutura de género y el mandato de violación" (Gender Structure and the Mandate of Rape).

To the critique of multiculturalism that I mentioned above, I dedicated several chapters of my book *La Nación y sus Otros* (The Nation and its Others); in particular, the chapter "Identidades Políticas / Alteridades Históricas: uma crítica a las certezas del pluralismo global" (Political Identities / Historical Alterities: a critique of the certainties of global pluralism). Also, in that book, I anticipate a critique of 'politics', which is becoming centripetal, internal, endogamous, and territorial in the sense of being closed in its own network of belonging.

BB & VG: Your work presents many exciting ways to explore the relationship between gender and coloniality. How can we confront today this historical mechanism that reinforces racism, colonialism, and gender violence in the context of the rise of the far-right worldwide?

RS: On the one hand, there is a reflection on the connections between racism, patriarchy and coloniality. That's

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one theme. On the other hand, there is the question of the formations of contemporary fascism. If there is a strategy, a method, we could say, and a structure that allows us to identify fascist ideologies, it is that they are all based on the construction of some 'other' as the enemy. Fascism needs an enemy, a sacrificial victim, and a scapegoat so that power and its allies can achieve cohesion. Fascism, then, is built by creating the 'other'. So, racialised people, women and sexual dissidents are easy prey for the role of this 'other'. The legacy of the permanent structure of coloniality makes available what is spoken of as 'the common enemy of society'. It's only a small step because this constructed 'other' as a threat was already available. Demonising women, racialised people and sexual dissidents is very easy; they are already under suspicion due to the effect of the colonial structure of the world.

BB & VG: For several years, we thought that countries that had experienced historical memory processes and more robust human rights struggles, such as Argentina, would be more shielded from authoritarian setbacks. However, today, we also see a revisionist and, in some cases, denialist wave in Argentina. How do you assess this process?

RS: We must consider at least two aspects of Argentinean political life. First, the exteriority of state management in relation to the administered: the territory and the lives of the people, installed since the foundation of our states – what I call the 'foundational error', which will establish the permanent coloniality of management. Second, the distance between 'politics' (the actions and decisions derived from the state structure, with political parties, organised social movements and the factions and interests within them, with the orientation of their eminently centripetal, intestinal, endogamous action) and 'the political' (which circulates in society, weaves social relations, and effectively guides history).

In the case of Argentina, the right-wing vote seems to be a request for a 'reboot' of politics coming from sectors of society demanding a fairer distribution of protagonism and incidence in history. They perceive politics as captured within party labyrinths, abandoning the spaces truly inhabited by people and feel themselves treated like herds available to be led. This lack (or expropriation) of protagonism gener-

ates resentment, especially among young people. Added to this is the message that "you don't exist; you don't have a full life if you don't live under the media spotlight". There is an accumulation of resentment due to the promises of democracy and modernity that have never been fulfilled.

Democracy has never ceased to be a project of democracy. And modernity – equal opportunities, fraternity, freedom – has also never ceased to be a project of modernity. This accumulation of resentment and disappointment is used by anti-democratic political forces. So even those 'rights' achieved by bringing justice and judgment to those responsible for the Argentinian genocide seem distant today. They are today the business of a state whose management and configuration the majorities don't participate in and don't feel part of.

BB & VG: Is there a Feminist International nowadays?

RS: The idea of an 'International' is undoubtedly interesting because it points to a feminism that crosses borders, communicates, and unites through shared demands, slogans and banners. However, it runs the same risk as the distance I mentioned earlier between 'the political' and 'politics'. Summits of 'experts' and orthodoxies can be created that damage the movement. The feminist movement will be pluralist, or it won't be. It will be for a world without hegemony, or it won't be. Because of the verticalism of Eurocentric feminism, parts of the movement in Africa have chosen to talk about 'womanism' rather than feminism. These are very different histories, with distinctive gender structures, struggles, and objectives shaped by these differences. When we see our common problems through the prism of differences, a feminist international can reach its rightful destination.

BB & VG: A last quick question: what do you think global sociology has to learn from the indigenous peoples of our continent?

RS: Precisely a politics that doesn't generate this distance between ruling summits and their peoples and a politics that can imagine a plural world without objectifying Nature and bodies. A "historical project of bonds" that is alive and in tension with the "historical project of things", these being very different imaginaries of what happiness is. ∎

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> Tribute to Izabela Barlinska:
40 Years Dedicated to the ISA

by former ISA Presidents **Margaret Archer**, **Michel Wieviorka**, **Michael Burawoy**, **Margaret Abraham**, and **Sari Hanafi**, and current ISA President **Geoffrey Pleyers**

Izabela Barlinska's speech at the tribute organized for her at the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne, 2023.

by Margaret Archer (ISA President 1986-1990)*

Over 40 years ago, the Executive Committee of the International Sociological Association (ISA), meeting in Poland, also met Izabela for the first time, standing dignified amid drifting snowflakes to welcome us. As the niece of Magdalena Sokołowska, I assumed this doctoral student was only helping with local arrangements. How wrong can one be? This was not one week off her thesis on Virginia Woolf but an introduction to four decades of working for the ISA. We got on immediately; after all, my school had prepared me for a degree in English literature, but I did wonder for several years if we had done right in encouraging her to leave Poland for the nomadic ISA.

The one person with no qualms was Tom Bottomore, one-time Executive Secretary himself, before becoming ISA President, who very early recognized Izabela's administrative and organizational talents whilst the Secretariat was based in Brussels. He became her lifelong supporter and friend as one of the rare men at the time who saw no contradiction between being female and professionally competent. Both of us were beneficiaries of his 'enlightenment'! Brussels was not to last, and plans were underway for transferring the Secretariat to Spain (1987). This was a challenging move as the ISA's understanding of the provision of a base for the Secretariat became entangled in a conflict with an indigenous but new Centre for Research,

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which counter-claimed the same accommodation in Madrid. I recall some 'negotiations' involving housing a genuinely enormous table and the ISA's protestations to the Ministry of Education.

When I write about 'the Secretariat', in fact, in 1987, this meant Izabela alone, who was a beginner in Spanish, had a huge talent in networking but knew few colleagues in Madrid, and had her common sense alone to rely upon as far as the domestic housing market was concerned. Her resilience was remarkable. She rapidly gained the support of the Professional Association in solving the accommodation problem, showed her talent in consolidating a new working team, quickly became enviably fluent in Spanish and acquired the rooftop apartment that it's hard to believe I've visited for the last time, to share a bottle as the sun set over Madrid.

Because the Executive Committee held its annual meeting in a different city every year, Izabela and I travelled together and became globalized before the term existed. Our collaboration intensified when I became President,

and only then did I realize how extensive her responsibilities were. From starting a new journal (*International Sociology*) – introducing Spanish belatedly as a third official language – and coping with the proliferation of Research Committees, to the protocol for welcoming the King and Queen to the World Congress (1990) – all these tasks impinged upon her and were effortlessly incorporated into her administrative workload.

Izabela later returned to her early aim of completing a doctorate, but this time devoted to the Solidarity movement in Poland and later published in Spanish and Polish. We always kept in touch. Most years, we attempted to take a week's holiday somewhere (often with Céline Saint-Pierre). Finally, when I became a Visiting Professor at the University of Navarra, Pamplona, it was delightful to fly in and out of Madrid and spend a couple of days with her – shopping for cushions, visiting the art museums and opening another bottle of wine on her roof garden. Izabela enriched every single member of today's ISA, including those who never had the privilege of meeting her. May she find her return to Poland welcoming and fulfilling. ■

* Margaret Archer wrote this on April 2, 2023, a month before she passed away (see the obituary in this issue of Global Dialogue*).*

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by **Michel Wieviorka (ISA President 2006-2010)**

ISA... IZABELA: yes, ISA has been "Bella" with IZAbela. Having been part of ISA since 1982 (Mexico!) and having worked closely with her when I was President, I can say that our association would not have been what it has been until now without her.

She has always been both incredibly efficient and wonderfully friendly. Aware of our intellectual and scientific life, part

of it, and excellent in administrative matters. Really global and international, and so Polish – on the good side of Polish political and social life. Present when necessary or useful but without any excess. Knowing everything and so many people among us, but never interfering. Let me add one word in French: Izabela is more than a critical actor of ISA. She is an elegant person; she has "la classe", la "grande classe". I wish her all the best for her new life. ■

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by **Michael Burawoy (ISA President 2010-2014)**

Izabela Barlinska has devoted herself to the flourishing of the ISA and, thereby, has become a major contributor to the development of international sociology and more recently to global sociology. It is very sad to hear of the passing of Margaret Archer, for she was another contributor to this project, working closely with Izabela in the crucial years when the ISA was being set up in Madrid. Of all the Presidents, she knew Izabela the best. Her tribute to Izabela was probably one of the last things she wrote.

Margaret Archer tells us how Izabela was recruited by her aunt to welcome the Executive Committee to Warsaw

in 1977 when Izabela was still a student. This was four years before Izabela became deeply embroiled in the Solidarity Movement. When Martial Law was declared on that fateful day in December 1981, the underground leadership of Solidarity encouraged Izabela to take up an invited position in the office of the ISA. The leadership thought her presence in Western Europe could provide an important link between the opposition in Poland and those in exile. To be clear, Izabela was not fleeing her country; she was not seeking asylum in the West. That never occurred to her. She was a loyal citizen of Poland, doing what she could to support democratic forces in Poland – a study of Izabela's life is especially fitting

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for the theme of this year's Congress, devoted to anti-authoritarian politics.

Although she never liked to flaunt her knowledge and expertise, we should remember that Izabela is a sociologist. While directing the ISA, she wrote her PhD dissertation at Complutense University in Madrid under the supervision of Professor Víctor Pérez-Díaz. It is a study of everyday life under Polish Solidarity and Martial Law, situated in the changing character of the opposition to the party state. The dissertation was published in Spanish under the title *La sociedad civil en Polonia y Solidaridad* ("Civil Society in Poland and Solidarity"). Although she didn't know it then, she shows how this was the beginning of the end of the Soviet order. It is an essential reminder that struggles against authoritarianism may not be successful in the short term. Still, nonetheless, they can have long-term effects.

But I stray from my topic – Izabela and her contribution to the ISA. I echo the sentiments of Michel Wieviorka and Margaret Abraham – she has been the pillar of the ISA. Let us not forget that when she began her association with the ISA in 1977, there were barely 1,000 members. When she became Executive Secretary in 1987, there were scarcely 2,000 members compared to the number before COVID exceeding 5,000 members. The numbers of Research Committees and National Association members have expanded at a similar exponential rate as the attendance of the Congresses. She oversaw the introduction of the bi-annual Forum. Throughout these 40 years, from her small office in Complutense University, Izabela has guided the ISA through tremendous technological transformation.

Somehow, she has managed to keep the machine going – with the assistance of part-time workers Nacho, Juan and Lola. Let us not forget that, today, the American Sociological Association has only doubled the ISA's membership but is served by 23 full-time staff! Let us be clear: the financial health of the ISA has depended upon the energy, devotion, and organizational genius of Izabela Barlinska.

As Executive Secretary, she has successfully negotiated this terrifyingly fractious organization – a mini United Nations – only because she has studiously kept out of ISA politics. She keeps her thoughts to herself in EC meetings, even under the most intense provocation. Her goal has always been supporting the ISA machinery, fostering important innovations like Wallerstein's regional seminars, Martinelli's PhD Laboratory, or Archer's new journal, *International Sociology*.

The EC makes the decisions, and Izabela carries them out to the best of her ability. And she is not one to shirk any labor. I still remember her working around the clock to attend to the long lines to register at the ISA Congress in Durban. She has always been in the trenches and on the frontlines of ISA meetings, just as she kept the ISA going backstage between meetings. She was the one to deal with the many crises we have faced – whether it meant switching a conference from one site in the world to another, peremptory closure of our office, negotiating for space for the Congress or Forum, etc. She had to ensure the ISA didn't lose money when overseeing the budget. Compared to other international organizations in the social sciences, ISA has had a long and thriving history – and we all owe Izabela an enormous debt. I wish her all the best as she moves on to her new career back in Poland. ◼

by **Margaret Abraham (ISA President 2014-2018)**

I have been truly fortunate to know Dr. Izabela Barlinska for over three decades. I am deeply grateful for having had the privilege to work closely with her. Izabela, your incredible calmness in crisis, multilingual capacity, institutional memory, and attention to all facets of ISA operations have been invaluable. Having worked closely with you, especially during my tenure as ISA Vice-President for Research and as ISA President, I can state that your tremendous support contributed to the success of the II ISA Forum in Buenos Aires and the XIX ISA World Congress in Toronto. I know what we all achieved could not have been done without you and your team's commitment, competence, professionalism and collaboration. As a feminist, I am also grateful to have had such an amazing woman and most highly qualified professional sociologist at the ISA secretariat's helm, contributing with vision and pragmatism to ensure the global sociological community's common good and continuing ISA's organizational vitality. ISA is a remarkable association, and I am glad you, Izabela, have been integral to this association's fantastic journey. So, I salute and hug you with a huge, sincere thank you! ◼

by Sari Hanafi (ISA President 2018-2023)

After all these testimonies, I am speechless. Yet the difference with all these testimonies is that I got to know Izabela Barlinska much earlier in my career than all these former presidents. This was when I was a Ph.D. candidate and one of the winners of the World Competition for Young Sociologists in the Congress of Bielefeld in 1990. Her kindness impressed me as she replied patiently to many of my questions. Some of them were stupid, as it was the first time I attended a big conference.

Since then, I have been in close contact with her as a member of the Executive Committee, Vice-President of National Associations and, more recently, as ISA President. She has never been reluctant to provide wise advice to me when I requested it. I should confess I did not always follow it, but, to her credit, this has not vexed her. In any case, I don't remember Izabela ever being excessively angry. Even in heated discussions, I envied her calmness. She may react after taking her time to reflect on heated matters.

I often enjoyed my conversations with her outside meetings. We rarely gossip against colleagues. Instead, we talk about Lebanon, Palestine, Poland, sociology, arts, literature, etc. As a cosmopolitan person, she has a great general culture. During COVID-19, we had many online meetings with VPs, EC and other committees. She often does not cast her availability in a doodle as she would always accommodate the best time for most of the meeting participants. At a certain point, I was embarrassed that sometimes, this would be early morning or late evening.

Izabela has the ISA memory, so she knows what usually would work and what would be the reaction of the sociologists' community to some of the ISA Executive Committee decisions. Izabela, we plan to hike together in a mountain one day. I am more eager to do it now to keep our friendship beyond ISA. Thank you, Izabela, for all you have done for ISA in the last 40 years. ISA owes you a lot… ∎

by Geoffrey Pleyers (ISA President 2023-2027)

The successive Presidents of the ISA have reminded us of the multiple ways Izabela Barlinska has played a crucial role in the history of the ISA over the past four decades. As an ISA Vice-President for Research, I had the privilege to witness her dedication, including one of her latest achievements: preparing the transition and training our new Executive Secretary. She managed it in her characteristic discreet way and with efficiency and love for the ISA. By doing so, she has given us all a lesson, not by a long discourse but by concrete practices. She reminds us that the ISA is worth so much dedication and is more important than anyone. I wish all the leaders in our association and the world had this dedication and were willing to prepare the next generation with much wisdom, commitment, and love for their organization.

Izabela Barlinska has shaped the ISA as no one else. She has been the face and the voice of the ISA to thousands of sociologists and a reference for anyone who doubted how to handle an issue at a Research Committee level or in the Executive Committee. We inherit an extraordinary association able to defend and develop sociology on all continents. We must maintain the high standards Izabela set and develop the new projects on this basis. The ISA is her association. It has been her home for almost four decades, and so it will remain. We will make sure she finds her space in the ISA over the next years and decades, and we all hope to see her again in ISA Forums and events. ∎

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To learn more about Izabela Barlinska, Global Dialogue *recommends the interview with her by Michael Burawoy, published in 2012 in two parts:* Part I *&* Part II.

> Global Sociology:
Four Transformations

by **Geoffrey Pleyers**, FNRS & Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, and ISA President (2023-2027)

Image created from macrovector image at Freepik.

New President's Address, XX World Congress of Sociology, Melbourne, July 1, 2023

While sociology aims at understanding the transformations of our world, our discipline is also affected and itself transformed by them. This is notably the case of the project of *global sociology*, which needs to be revisited considering the transformations our world has gone through over the past decades. I started studying globalization in the late 1990s. By then, it was a central topic in sociology. "Sociology for One World" was already the theme for the ISA 1990 World Congress. Thirty-three years later, global challenges have become even more critical. Our world has become increasingly "global". However, how we see the world, globalization, and sociology have changed dramatically. In this short address, I would like to briefly mention four of these changes, why they require renewing the project of a global sociology, and what they have meant for ISA.

> **New tools for communications and connections**

One of the most dramatic changes since the 1990s is the massive use of "new information and communication technologies". The Internet and the cyber world had just started in the 1990s, but connectivity was soon considered foundational to an era of intensifying globalization (Castells, 1996). Nowadays, digital media and technologies have become a major part of the lives of most human beings. They have dramatically changed how we communicate, inform ourselves, and live together. They have deeply transformed the public space in democratic, illiberal, and authoritarian regimes alike.

Digital communication technologies have brought challenges and opportunities to ISA and to global sociology.

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Digital communications provide tools to make visible sociological analyses from different regions of the world and to reach out to larger audiences among citizens and policymakers. ISA organized the first large online congress in social sciences during the pandemic, attended by over 3,500 researchers. Today, the ISA social media keeps our community alive and informed daily. Online meetings have also allowed more participatory dynamics in ISA, notably through the online meetings of the Research Council.

> **A limited planet**

The climate disaster and a growing ecological consciousness have dramatically changed the meaning and experience of our globality. In the 1990s, "globalization" referred to the expansion of the Western model of the market and formal democracy in a world reunited after the Cold War, and seemed limitless. Nowadays, the core questions of global sociology have taken a new form with the climate meltdown and the destruction of nature.

"How do we live together on a limited planet?" This is arguably the most important question sociology must address in the twenty-first century. Ecology and environmental issues are more than specific objects for sociology: they intersect with all the objects and fields of research topics and have become a central question for sociology. They will transform our discipline and what is expected from sociology and sociologists. This will be a central topic in ISA over the next four years.

> **Rising authoritarianism rather than the expansion of democracy**

In the 1990s, most intellectuals, policymakers, and civil society actors shared the conviction, or at least the hope, that the intensification of globalization and interconnection enabled by the Internet would imply the expansion of democracy and respect for human rights.

A quarter century later, the theme chosen for our 2023 World Congress was "Resurgent Authoritarianism". Unfortunately, this was an excellent and timely choice by Sari Hanafi. The hopes of new waves of democratization that had surged again with the Arab Spring faded away in the following decade. Illiberal and authoritarian regimes strengthened on all continents. They learned efficient ways of using social media and communication technologies to control their people, orient elections in other countries, and project their narratives and regime model globally.

Sociologists and social scientists have dedicated a great deal of research to authoritarian regimes and actors, and to movements that threaten democracy; very often, they also threaten sociologists. The freedom of research has been challenged in many countries, whether by increasing state control or by the multiplication of threats by far-right actors or paramilitary militias. In our times, a global sociology requires particular attention and support for sociologists who face threats while conducting their research. On January 25, 2016, Giulio Regeni, a young Italian sociologist and member of ISA RC47, was arrested and murdered by the Egyptian police while researching independent unions in Cairo. Our 2021 Forum started with a tribute to Marielle Franco, a sociologist, local politician, and activist against state violence who was murdered by gangs in Rio de Janeiro on March 14, 2018. One of the most insightful contributions to the 2021 ISA Forum was written in Ankara jail by Cihan Erdal, a PhD student at Carleton University, who was arrested while conducting fieldwork in Istanbul.

> **The rise of the Global South**

In the 1990s, globalization was associated with Westernization, expanding the Western market economy, culture, way of life, and worldview. In the twenty-first century, globalization refers to the rise of actors and countries from different regions of the world. Global media focus on their rise as economic and geopolitical actors. Their increasing role as producers of knowledge is at least as significant.

Few disciplines have been impacted by this rise as much as sociology. The deeper connections and dialogues between sociologists from different continents, the broader diffusion of groundbreaking work by scholars from the Global South, and new perspectives on the histories and geography of our discipline have turned the meaning of "global sociology" upside down. In the 1990s, the global sociology literature was entirely dominated by Western scholars. The Global South and the "East" were often seen as sites for empirical research fed by Western concepts. Nowadays, the heart of global sociology lies in making contributions by scholars and actors from the Global South visible and challenging the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge. Theories, concepts, and analyses by scholars from the Global South have helped us to understand social challenges as much in the Global South as in the Global North. They have transformed the way we see concepts as crucial as modernity, inequalities, and environmental justice. They have shown different ways to relate to nature, the world, and ourselves.

Contrary to what some of their detractors claim, decolonial, subaltern, or postcolonial perspectives do not focus their epistemic proposals on erasing the contributions of "Western sociology" to start a "decolonial sociology". As with knowledge produced in any other part of the world, European and North American sociology should be situated in its time and place, challenged in some of its claims to universalism, and develop in a renewed global dialogue with concepts, worldviews, and theories from the Global South.

Global sociology can neither remain rooted in the Western universities and canons that presented themselves as universal nor be limited to criticism of this Western sociology.

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Decolonial, post-colonial, and subaltern perspectives invite us to situate social theories and revisit some of the key concepts of our discipline in a dialogue with realities and knowledge rooted in different parts of the world. Opening spaces for dialogue among researchers and approaches from different continents, and promoting better inclusion of epistemologies and scholars from the Global South and from oppressed minorities has been one of the main goals of ISA since its foundation; and even more so since the 1990s and the projects developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.

More thoroughly including sociologists, research, analyses, and theories from all continents is not only a matter of democratizing sociology, it is also one of the most insightful paths to improve our understanding of social realities and actors. Therefore, we must do much more than increase ISA membership in the Global South. We need to foster these colleagues' active participation and full involvement in ISA, our Research Committees, our events, and our projects; and support their National Associations.

> Openness and care

Global sociology is not only a theoretical project, a set of epistemological debates, and some methodological challenges. It is also a stance that is at once sociological, cultural, and personal.

Global sociology after – and with – the decolonial turn starts with an openness to perspectives grounded in different worldviews, cultures, and social backgrounds. It is rooted in the acceptance of exposing oneself to the risk (and hope) of losing some of one's certainties and learning from the encounter with the other. It is grounded in and fed by the commitment – and pleasure – to read and meet people from different continents, the openness to look at our research objects from different standpoints, to understand them in different ways, and maybe to understand ourselves and our place in the world differently.

Insightful research and theories from different parts of the world, tolerant dialogues among situated approaches and analyses, and a willingness to learn from each other are crucial components of a renewed global sociology.

Setting up spaces that encourage intercultural dialogues in which we can share our research results and perspectives in a supportive environment is the main role of ISA. Fulfilling it requires more than intentions, discourses, and analyses. It also requires practices of openness, tolerance, and care for each other, particularly in an international and multicultural environment.

Let me give you a concrete example. A few months ago, I attended the ISA PhD Laboratory. One of the participants arrived exhausted from a long and stressful journey from Palestine. During the dinner, she had a panic attack after being interrogated at the borders for so long. Two or three other participants discreetly took her to another table, listened to her and supported her. A young doctoral researcher took the initiative to book a room in a nearby hotel, cared for her during the evening and ensured she had a restful night. At nine in the morning, both were back with the group for the opening session, ready for what both would experience as an insightful week of learning and exchanges with fellow PhD students and researchers from all continents. It was done in such a kind and discreet way that I did not even notice it on that evening. However, this kind of concrete action teaches us that caring for each other is an indispensable part of developing a global sociology.

While it remains mostly invisible, this care and solidarity in action is crucial to ISA. The example I referred to also shows us that ISA and global sociology are not only happening in our large meetings and congresses. ISA is embodied in intercultural encounters, exchanges among sociologists from different continents, openness to perspectives and research from different regions of the world, and in practices of care that allow us to share them in a supportive environment. Developing this global sociology rooted in the opening to others' perspectives and in practices of care is even more important in a time of rising authoritarianism, nationalisms, inequalities, and environmental collapse.

As the XXth World Congress of Sociology is coming to its end, let us take some of this ISA with us and implement this openness to global dialogue and this care for each other in our practices. Let us build together a renewed, more open and global sociology, starting where we are active in our everyday lives as sociologists, as researchers, as teachers, as citizens, and as human beings.

The great challenge of our times is the progressive emergence of a planetary consciousness that will enable us to face together the common challenges we face, starting with global warming, the environmental crisis, rising inequalities, and the threats to democracy. If we, sociologists, are up to the task, sociology will contribute to this planetary awareness and take its place in solving some of the challenges of this century. ■

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Related publications by Geoffrey Pleyers:
Global Sociology as a Renewed Global Dialogue, *Global Dialogue*, 13.1, April 2023.
For a global sociology of social movements. Beyond methodological globalism and extractivism, *Globalizations*, 2023.

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> Personal Tribute to
Margaret Archer
(1943-2023)

by **Martin Albrow**, London, United Kingdom

Credit: Manuel Castells Clemente / Universidad de Navarra.

So sad to learn of Maggie's passing! We had known each other for a long time. We met initially in 1966 as lecturers in the newly established sociology department at the University of Reading, UK. At 23, she completed her PhD at the London School of Economics on the educational aspirations of English working-class parents and their effects on their children. Five years older than she, I had not even finished my Master's there. Maybe I was daunted! I moved on, leaving her to cope with a mad professor for the next seven years. She still published fourteen papers and then moved to Warwick, where she spent the major part of her career. We kept in touch.

She was a prodigious worker, entirely focused on sociology, advancing it as a discipline rather than her own career. I won't attempt to seriously appreciate her central intellectual contribution to the field, many others will do that, but I will pay my tribute to the work we did together for the International Sociological Association. On her initiative as the then Chair of ISA's Publication Committee, she approached me to help found a new journal. It was to be called *International Sociology* and counter what we both felt was the unduly national focus of the major journals: even when ostensibly open to all, they still required all submissions to be in English. But rashly, we said we would arrange for translation from any language! We did, even and especially Chinese.

Our first issue came out in 1986, with a Foreword by Fernando Cardoso, President of ISA, not yet of Brazil! Its six papers came from Poland, India, Norway, Bulgaria and the US (2). Mission accomplished! So we thought, but too soon, since the original publishing arrangements collapsed along with my Cardiff institution. There began an arduous negotiation period before Sage stepped in to secure the journal's now long-standing reputation. Maggie was resourceful and committed throughout and fully deserved to become the next President of ISA.

She was indeed a remarkable motivator and always succeeded in mobilizing the talent necessary for the occasion. My last experience of her abilities in this regard was at a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, of which she became President in 2014. A lasting memory is seeing her chairing a meeting that included both Bernie Sanders and Jeffrey Sachs.

But capping all my images of her is the one at the opening ceremony of the World Congress of Sociology in Madrid in 1990. Those of the 4,000 delegates who could squeeze into the vast auditorium waited for the most distinguished guests to grace the stage. They walked on, the Spanish Queen, Maggie, and the King in that order. She, the outgoing ISA President, splendid and statuesque, clad in her usual white, gave the audience a regal wave. She was a phenomenon, a unique talent, which no one should hope to emulate. She supported all around her but never expected them to be other than themselves. Sociologists worldwide will miss her person sorely. But her contribution to the discipline will long live on. ■

June 26, 2023

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> Critical Theory and Global Sociology: Sisters in Arms?

by **Stephan Lessenich**, Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Germany

Institut für Sozialforschung, *Frankfurt am Main, in the 1920s.*

The 100th anniversary of the Institute of Social Research, and thus of the so-called Frankfurt School, is the moment to ask why Critical Theory *Frankfurt style* has run out of steam – and when did it do so. Often, Critical Theory's communicative turn as processed by Jürgen Habermas in the early 1980s is seen as its critical juncture. Habermas' move not only paved the way for the effective de-materialization of critical-theoretical thinking, but it relegated class analysis and the logics of capitalist reproduction to second place, if not to its margins. Beyond that, Habermas' focus on an immanent critique of liberal democracy geared the second generation of Critical Theory towards an insistence on the political completion of modernity's "unfinished project", with the European Union becoming the main object of normative desire and the potential role model of a social-democratic design of late-modern, post-national society.

> Eurocentric Critical Theory missed globalization

Against this background, it does not seem to be an exaggeration to claim that Critical Theory in some way missed globalization. At least in its *Habermasian* mainstream, it stuck to a certain Eurocentrism, or Occidentalism for that matter, that had already defined most of its first-generation representatives. After World War I, incipient Critical Theory was driven by the puzzle of a failed (or absent) working class revolution against capitalist domination in Western Europe; from the early 1930s onward, it wondered about the material and psycho-social foundations of fascism and the rise of National Socialism; after 1945, and for more than two decades (until the students' movement in the late 1960s), it was driven by the question of whether democracy could take hold more than only formally in post-fascist Germany (or, moving beyond that particular question, what the potential for social emancipation might be after reason had turned into myth and destruction). So, from the very beginning and throughout its history, and in spite of a US interlude of almost two decades, Critical Theory had a strongly European complexion, and it has retained it until today. Investigating the normative paradoxes of capitalist modernization, as the Institute for Social Research has claimed to do since the beginning of the 21st century, may be said to be a reflection of this structural bias: again, the scientific (and political) agenda centered around an immanent critique of Western modernity, which was accused of having converted individualization and self-determination from an emancipatory promise into an institutional demand.

From the perspective of the rest of the (capitalist) world, such a research agenda obviously comes across as odd and self-referential. For a century now, and in almost all of its classical and contemporary variants, both Western colonialism and imperial rule, on the one hand, and the history of decolonialization and postcoloniality, on the other, have been conspicuously absent from the Critical Theory (with capitals) of high, late, and latest capitalism. There has not been any major, broad, or long-lasting attempt within Critical Theory to provincialize Europe and the European historical experience – or Critical Theory itself. Until the recent past, the logic of capitalist reproduction criticized by Critical theorists was synonymous with the logic of Western capitalism: the normative horizon of such a critique is restricted to the timeless catalogue of the ever-

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same values as transmitted by European Enlightenment; and the empirical point of reference for all its analytical and diagnostic thinking is made up almost exclusively of the social reality (or what is being portrayed as such) of the rich democracies in the Western hemisphere (or, more recently, the Global North).

> Critical Theory and Global Sociology

Having said this, it should be pretty clear that Critical Theory should have an interest in opening itself up to what I would call Global Sociology. But why should Global Sociology worry about Critical Theory?

Let me summarize what, to my understanding, Global Sociology is about. First, Global Sociology is *relational* in its analytical perspective, systematically relating social phenomena at one place in the capitalist world order to what is happening (and has happened) in other places: relating Western economic success to the exploitation of "cheap" labor and nature elsewhere; relating the social structure of life chances in any "national society" to the (changing) geoeconomic and geopolitical structures of domination; or relating the potential legitimation of a given political order to the possibility of effectively externalizing the costs and conditions of its stable functioning. Second, Global Sociology is *decentered* in its empirical approach, in the sense of systematically taking into account the multiplicity of local, regional, national, and transnational entities and practices that make up for the institutional logics and everyday lifeworlds of "real capitalism" (and capitalist realism). Third, Global Sociology is *networked* in its professional praxis, connecting research from around the globe in a – as far as possible, given the circumstances and their unequal positionings – co-operative, non-competitive community of researchers engaged in the critical reconstruction of capitalist reproduction in the global age.

Obviously, this is not only a stylized, but an idealized picture: an ideal-typical version – and vision – of a would-be Global Sociology. Especially with regard to the third characteristic, real-existing global sociology falls short of the ideal type, because global sociologists tend to be individualized, sectoralized, and/or nationalized by force of the political economy of the academic field. Certainly there are some institutional centers of gravity, be it in the context of the International Sociological Association or (regionally) of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales; and there is, evidently, *Global Dialogue*. But there is still a long way to go.

> Critical Theory can inform Global Sociology

Once again: What could the role of Critical Theory be, de-globalized as it sadly is, along that way? In my view, Critical Theory, and more so one that is reflexive of its historical roots, could inform a Global Sociology in the making in a double sense. On the one hand, it could serve as a corrective for a globally engaged sociology by injecting it with a certain resistance so as to be able to identify the "revolutionary subject" around every corner, thus keeping Global Sociology away from wishful thinking just as much as from an uncritical co-fraternization with the social movement of the day. On the other hand, and in a somewhat paradoxical argument, Critical Theory could effectively reassure Global Sociology that it is capitalism – in all its varieties – that is at the core of the social distortions and societal contradictions we are witnessing. From the capture of the Americas to the recently upgraded Fortress Europe, it is capitalism that has been and still is at work globally. And let's face it: capitalism kills.

Reasonable or not, then, I envision Global Sociology and Critical Theory as sisters in arms. Their arms, for sure, are social research and scientific critique. ◼

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> Cotton Colonialism:
A Postcolonial Rethinking of Capitalism

by **Gurminder K. Bhambra**, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Cotton plantation. Credit: iStock, Mark Castiglia, 2023.

The idea of modern capitalism as a distinct socioeconomic formation is common to many different sociological approaches, especially those inspired by the work of Marx and Weber. This also holds true for critical theory, which connects its normative arguments about human emancipation and possibilities to what Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi (2018) call "a path-dependent sequence of accumulation regimes that unfolds diachronically in history".

This developmental sequence typically locates the emergence of modern capitalism in Europe in a realm of petty producers disrupting the status hierarchies of feudal social arrangements to create commercial opportunities for prof-

it. What is missed is the colonial context of modern capitalism. For example, the domestic enclosure movement necessary for the creation of a domestic labour market is separated from its overseas manifestation in the appropriation of land and labour. It is also separated from the state-organized political processes of colonialism which that appropriation entailed, and which were a necessary part of domestic production.

In this short contribution, I argue for the need to understand colonialism as being fundamental to capitalism and how it is constituted. I have presented the longer theoretical justification elsewhere. Here I wish to discuss a single instance which embodies my general argument. It reveals

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how understandings of capitalism that are represented within the social sciences, including critical theory, are Eurocentric and involve the elision of colonialism.

> ### A cotton industry without cotton

In the mid-nineteenth century, the success of the cotton industry in Manchester, associated with the deployment of labour via technological improvements in spinning and weaving, transformed a small provincial town into a global city. This ensured Manchester's almost iconic centrality within the Industrial Revolution and thus its central status within understandings of capitalism.

As Utsa Patnaik pertinently asks: How did a country that did not produce the raw material – cotton – base its industrial revolution on cotton textiles? Cotton is a plant that is native to India, not to Britain or even to Europe. Cultivating cotton and the manufacture of cotton textiles go back 5,000 years to the Indus Valley civilisation; India had long been an exporter of cotton textiles across much of the world.

In the 1600s, the English East India Company began importing significant quantities of cotton textiles from India. In the late seventeenth century, the popularity of the novel textile led the woollen cloth merchants to petition the government for a complete legal ban on its sale and consumption; even "burial in anything other than woollen shrouds [was made] illegal" . Such policies continued till the late eighteenth century, protecting the wool trade but creating the conditions for a domestic cotton industry.

> ### Historical and sociological neglect

This 150-year period of protectionism, organised through mercantilist policies targeting Indian textile imports, was the context in which Manchester's cotton industry was able to get going and then to flourish. As Patnaik argues, however, this is not mentioned by any major historian, in Britain, of the industrial revolution and technical change: not by Deane and Cole, or by Landes, or Hobsbawm, or Floud and McCloskey, or Hill; nor is it then mentioned by sociologists interested in the emergence of the modern world or issues of political economy.

From having had a 25% share of the global market in the early eighteenth century, based significantly on its trade in finished textiles, British colonial policies had reduced India to becoming a supplier of raw cotton to British industry by the end of the nineteenth century. Indian manufacturing was systematically destroyed, as were Indian livelihoods and the lives that depended on it.

Alongside this, the British also made use of cheap raw cotton produced by enslaved and coerced labour on plantations in the United States. Cotton plantations, however, were not only to be found in the southern states of the US but also, in the nineteenth century, across India and in West Africa. In the 1840s, for example, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the newly set up Cotton Supply Association lobbied the colonial government in India to privilege the cultivation of 'New Orleans' varieties of cotton over indigenous cotton in order to serve British manufacturing.

> ### The emergence of capitalism from colonialism

So as we can see, the industrial strength of Britain did not rest on an endogenous Industrial Revolution. It involved the systematic destruction of manufacturing in India, the establishment of a global plantation economy based on coerced and enslaved labour, and the forced opening up of markets for the sale of its goods. Therefore, colonialism has to be understood as integral to developments seen as industrial and which are regarded as the basis for the subsequent emergence of capitalism.

The forms of appropriation involved in such processes cannot be understood simply as the appropriation of surplus value from labour (whether free or unfree): instead we need to seriously consider the appropriation of land and the destruction of commerce and manufacturing elsewhere.

> ### There is no transformation without understanding

The reason why such a reorientation is necessary is that most critical approaches to capitalism focus on the possibilities of resistance contained within the capital–labour relation. It is this which tends to be taken as the key to capitalism's transformation. Thus, distributive justice directed at the surplus generated by labour and misappropriated by capital neglects other forms of misappropriation; forms that are long-standing and central to the very configuration of capitalism. ◼

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> The Periphery Writes Back:

Worlding the Colonial Experience

by **Manuela Boatcă**, University of Freiburg, Germany, and member of ISA Research Committee on Historical Sociology (RC56)

In 2004, an international symposium dedicated to "Critical Theory in the Dialogue between Europe and Latin America and the Present Tasks of Critique" took place in Mexico City. Speaking in front of an audience of mostly German and Latin American scholars, Argentinean philosopher Enrique Dussel prefaced his talk, titled "From Critical Theory to the Philosophy of Liberation: Some Themes for Dialogue", by remarking that he primarily wanted to take seriously "the 'subjects' of the dialogue and their *locus enuntiationis*: *who* we are and *from where* we speak". Not only are such dialogues infrequent and their terms sometimes obscure, Dussel added, but they rarely take place symmetrically.

Instead, the main task of a "critical philosophy with a global validity" for the twenty-first century, which in his view had not yet been constructed, would be to "set out from the perspective of those excluded from the global system (peripheral countries) and those excluded within particular states (impoverished masses)" (Dussel, 2004). This appeal dovetailed well with other contemporary as well as earlier appeals: Latin American dependency theorists' call for an analysis of development from the perspective of the periphery; the plea of German feminist subsistence theorists, such as Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia Von Werlhof, to incorporate "views from below"; Third World feminists' proposal to rewrite the history of slavery and colonialism from "oppositional locations"; and the growing number of "standpoint theories" of race and gender that had foregrounded epistemic claims in the 1980s and 90s.

> An unanswered appeal

Today, almost twenty years after Dussel's plea, subaltern, peripheral, and dissident perspectives, the experience and positionality of the colonial subject, and the role of one's epistemic location in global knowledge production and circulation are well-established at the heart of postcolonial and decolonial approaches. Together, they amount to a theory that is critical of global power relations. But is that the same as critical theory, or as *the* Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School? In other words, has the dialogue envisaged in the 2004 symposium occurred?

The short answer is "no", to all of these questions. A longer answer would have to include, maybe even begin with, Dussel's claim that, by turning a blind eye to global economic disparities, the second Frankfurt School abandoned "negative critique" and thus "ceased to be truly critical" of both historical reality and the ongoing "negativity of starvation" in the periphery. A critical theory that took as its starting point the standard of living at the core of the capitalist system, Dussel cautioned with explicit reference to Habermas, not only remained Eurocentric, but evinced a "provincial partiality" that is outrageous to those in the periphery. Differences of focus, scope, and degree exist between postcolonial and decolonial approaches too, as do differences between generations within the same approach. The political economy of global capitalism was arguably more important to Latin American decolonial approaches drawing from dependency theory and world-systems analysis in the 2000s than it was to Anglophone postcolonial approaches focused on issues of culture, identity and representation in the 1990s – but that is not necessarily the case today, or not for all authors. Writing in 2008 about the different genealogies of critique of colonial and imperial rule, Venezuelan anthropologist and decolonial scholar Fernando Coronil pointed out that, in the Americas, critique was centered around the political economy of dependency, while in the newly independent states in Africa and Asia, it had crystallized around the sequence of colonialism and postcolonialism. In calling for a dialogue between the two critical traditions, Coronil focused on complementarity rather than differences: "Critical responses to colonialism from different locations take different but complementary forms. While from an Asian perspective it has become necessary to 'provincialize' European thought, from a Latin American perspective it has become in-

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"*For a symmetrical dialogue between critical theories to occur and continue, we must pluralize the geographic and epistemic locations of critical theory production*"

dispensable to globalize the periphery: to recognize the world-wide formation of what appear to be self-generated modern metropolitan centers and backward peripheries".

> ### > The long-awaited reply

Having the periphery – whether as dependency theory, subaltern studies, or decoloniality – write back to Eurocentric critical theory (in the singular) was one important step. Socioeconomic conditions in the world-system's peripheries, as well as supposedly non-modern social relations within core areas, were thus revealed to be constitutive of modernity and its underside, coloniality, instead of being banished outside the modern. Chattel slavery and its consequences, racially segregated work forces both in the core and on the periphery, exploitative bourgeoisies and "dual economies" in the Americas, patriarchal gender relations in Africa and the Middle East, and the coexistence of forms of wage and non-wage labor in all colonized areas could no longer serve as proof of the periphery's alleged backwardness, but of the entanglements constituted through colonial and imperial rule.

For a symmetrical dialogue between critical theories (in the plural) to occur, and for it to continue, we must pluralize the geographic and epistemic locations of critical theory production. Making the colonial and imperial experience central to the analysis of the historical reality and the current materiality of power relations is still the exception rather than the rule in an overwhelmingly uncritical, presentist and Eurocentric social science from which non-Western, non-European, and non-White experiences have long been erased. As a result, until late in the twentieth century there emerged a sociology of inequality and stratification that neglected race and ethnicity in the West; a sociology of capitalist development that downplayed slave economies, indentured labor, and all forms of non-wage work; and a sociology of migration devoid of both colonizers and colonial subjects. Missing from all the accounts was the experience of women, to be only partially and gradually corrected by the inclusion of White Western women as objects and then subjects of sociological production in the West. Worlding the peripheral experience – in Coronil's words; globalizing the periphery – would render central processes of the capitalist world-economy such as the European colonial expansion, the trade in enslaved people, and European emigration to the Americas as visible as the class conflict, proletarianization, and social mobility of Western European industrial states on the analysis of which sociology was founded. ■

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> Totality and Exteriority:
Categories for a Decolonial Critical Theory

by **Patricia Cipollitti Rodríguez**, CUNY Graduate Center, USA

Among critical theory's hallmark methods for the study of society is "immanent critique." This may be partially described as an assessment of whether and how a given set of social arrangements goes wrong on its own terms. Following Marx (who in this respect followed Hegel), critical theorists identify contradictions that, as Nancy Fraser puts it, arise "systematically and non-accidentally" between norms that are "immanent" in society and the conditions that social participants realize through their actions. Marx's classic example references the market freedoms that define bourgeois society and the recurrent reality of workers' "freedom to starve." Critical theorists then analyze these tendencies for crises to arise and the potential for social transformation that they, in turn, give rise to.

By developing normative standards from "within" the practices under examination, critical theorists purport to sidestep the ideological trappings of much mainstream analytic moral and political philosophy. Where mainstream approaches often presume that ideals like "justice" or "equality" apply across temporalities and geographies, critical theorists acknowledge the thoroughly historical character of ideals – and that, under conditions of inequality, appeal to them tends to sneak in the interests of dominant groups. Interpretations of freedom in capitalist societies are a case in point.

> Totality and Eurocentrism

Decolonial theorists insist that this is not the full story. A central problem with dialectical methods like immanent critique, according to Argentine-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel, is their pretension to *totality*. The concept of totality enjoys wide purchase among Western Marxists and those influenced by this tradition. In the present context, totality takes on at least two meanings. First, immanent critique stipulates that all the normative resources necessary for social evaluation and transformation can be derived from within the object of critique. Insofar as capitalist society constitutes that object, it thus comprises the totality of tools for criticism. Second, and relatedly, capitalism is conceived as a global structural totality insofar as its processes and sensibilities shape virtually every human community on our planet.

According to Dussel, such totalizing thinking is Eurocentric. It problematically overlooks myriad forms of life that are perhaps adjacent to but thoroughly distinct from capitalist society. Crucially, so-called *exterior*s to the totality of the object, where people think, act, and feel "otherwise" to Western capitalist modernity, are methodologically relevant. These present substantive normative alternatives – ideals, conceptualizations, practices, and so on – through which the object of critique can be assessed and transformed. Non-capitalist ways of living can, for instance, demonstrate in concrete terms what a non-extractive relation to nature entails.

> Analectics and exteriority

Dussel dubs the resulting decolonial method *analectics*, where "ana-" locates the critical standpoint "outside" rather than "within" the object. Thinking from the "other side" (or the "underside") of capitalist modernity is one of the distinctive contributions of decolonial thought vis-à-vis critical theory's dialectical assessments "from the inside."

The analectical category of *exteriority* features, explicitly or implicitly, in much Latin American decolonial thought. One example is the notion of *buen vivir* ("living well") described by Mónica Chuji, Grimaldo Rengifo, and Eduardo Gudynas in the March 2023 issue of *Global Dialogue* as an "ensemble of South American perspectives" that "encompasses positions that question modernity while opening up other ways of thinking, feeling, and being – other ontologies – rooted in specific histories, territories, cultures, and ecologies." Indigenous traditions heavily inform *buen vivir* perspectives. Those authors note that *buen vivir* has spread rapidly within and beyond the Andean countries from which it originates, offering theoretical grounds for specific alternatives to capitalist development such as constitutional recognition of the rights of nature. *Buen vivir*, an idea cultivated in exteriority, thus enables analectical critique. Other prominent uses of exteriority refer not only to the lifeways of indigenous communities but also of rural peasants, Afro-descendant populations, the urban poor, and even the region's underdeveloped nation-states.

> The global reach of capital

Analectics may appear misguided to critical theorists of a Marxian bent. To posit any exterior to capitalism, according to them, is to romantically deny the consolidation of what Immanuel Wallerstein dubbed the "modern world-system" over the past 500 years. It is to fail to understand the contemporary social domain, at the world scale, as a structure constituted by interrelated parts; specifically, as

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"*Critical theorists acknowledge the thoroughly historical character of ideals like 'justice' or 'equality'*"

an aggregate of dynamic economic processes and social practices, carried out through human action, that support the accumulation of surplus value. According to this view, the relation between center and periphery, exploiter and exploited, rich and poor, waged and unwaged labor, and so on is not one of strict separation but one between constituents *of* and *within* a systemic totality. Moreover, capital's reach is global. To trade in currency, to participate in local markets up- or down-stream of global ones, to be indebted, to contend with extractive companies and states that deploy force to maintain national sovereignty, is to be meaningfully imbricated in this totality. Very few (if any) communities persist "absolutely," "radically," or "maximally" separate from capitalist economic circuits, to use adverbs often employed by Dussel and other decolonial Latin American thinkers to describe exteriority.

In light of this Marxian worry, those who employ the category of exteriority must clarify that the sense in which capitalist modernity, qua *totality*, differs from exterior communities is not material. Most decolonial thinkers embrace the world-systems thesis: we would not be able to adequately understand contemporary forms of exploitation, extraction, or oppression without it. The relevant separation is, rather, experiential and normative. That is, people who inhabit exteriorities think, feel, and judge differently. This may include interacting with the market differently than the classes who systematically benefit from it.

> Problems with modern dualisms

This response would nevertheless fail to satisfy those critical theorists who, in a postmodern vein, question the conceptualization of "modernity" operative in prominent analectical proposals. In their view, analectical proposals stipulate modernity as a cultural unity that encompasses ways of thinking and feeling that are shaped by instrumental reason, capitalist accumulation, colonialism, and so on – from which "other" ways of thinking, feeling, and being are fundamentally distinct.

To postmodern-leaning critics, such a conceptualization of modernity is, first of all, politically suspect. The reification of cultures into cohesive unities fosters dualist patterns of thought, including classifications of Self/Other. As postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said have cautioned, such classifications may be easily mobilized to control "other" populations. Second, it is descriptively mistaken: forms of social life are historically contingent and heterogeneous compositions of practices liable to change through

transcultural exchanges. The signs that grant meaning to these practices, moreover, can be transposed across cultural horizons, taking on different functions from those at their place of emergence. Connections between lifeways and the geographic territories where they originate may exist, as *buen vivir*'s proponents suggest. However, such links should not be presumed to be essential, unchanging, or radically incommunicable.

> Exteriorities as hybrid cultures and the plurality of normative resources

Instead of thinking in terms of "Modernity," then, those who employ the category of exteriority should think in terms of "modernization." This is a process whereby communities engage with modern practices, symbols, technologies, and rationalities, like those encountered in the market. Moreover, owing to their material and political integration into the world-system, communities cannot help but engage. (In this and other ways, asymmetric power bears upon transculturation processes.) Borrowing terminology from Latin American cultural studies, exteriorities are "hybrid cultures" in which participants may daily draw from multiple co-existing rationalities – "modern" and "traditional," commodified and non-commodified ¬– and ascribe, for instance, modern meanings to traditional practices and historically specific meanings to newly introduced practices. Around the world we encounter multiple modernities: many distinct and constantly changing hybrid cultures in which modern forms play a significant role.

The category of exteriority rightly emphasizes that ways of thinking, feeling, being, and valuing differ significantly from place to place, especially between (admittedly heterogeneous) centers and peripheries within the world-system. But, taking to heart the postmodern worry, we must recognize that relationships between locales are porous and dynamic. We should avoid romanticizing exterior communities; and we should not overlook those who, even while situated within the Global North and West, engage in practices whose meaning exceeds so-called "modern" rationalities, such as care work. Immanent and analectical critique both require a robust understanding of global structures, i.e. of totality. However, by foregrounding exteriority, analectical critique turns our attention to the tremendous plurality of normative resources for criticism that exist worldwide, especially in peripheries; and the multiple paths toward transformation they potentially offer. ■

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> Culture Industry:
A (Political) Research Agenda for Critical Theory

by **Bruna Della Torre de Carvalho Lima**, Frankfurt University, Germany, and University of Campinas, Brazil
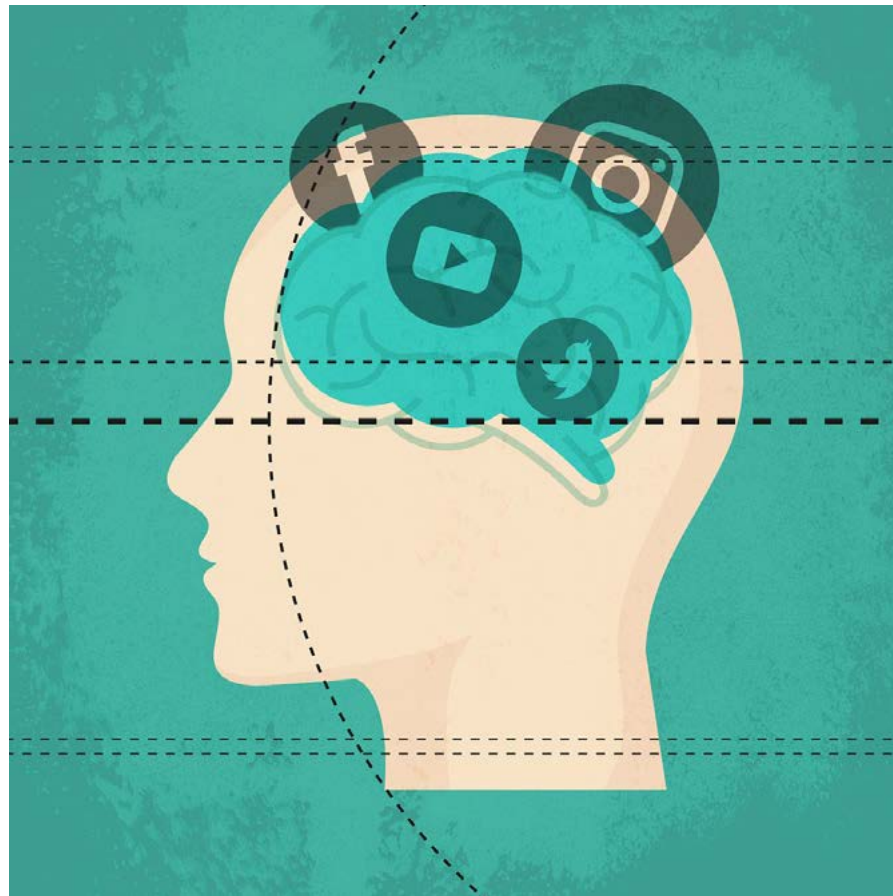
Illustration: Arbu, 2023.

> Adorno and the culture industry

"Culture industry" is a controversial concept. Despite Theodor W. Adorno's many reservations regarding the use of the expression "mass culture" as analogous to the concept of "culture industry," the latter is still generally identified with an (immense) collection of cultural goods. In many branches of sociology, "culture industry," or some aspect of that industry, has become synonymous with cultural goods, such as television or radio. In his debates with Helmut Becker, Adorno warned us not to approach television per se but only in conjunction with the rest of the culture industry system: studying culture industry only empirically is limited as its effects can only be perceived over decades of exposure. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, Adorno and Max Horkheimer describe culture industry as a "system" composed of "radio, cinema, and magazines." This

is an aesthetic and cultural system, but perhaps most importantly, a system of socialization and an apparatus that manufactures desires and identification with reality. The concept entails a labor-related aspect overlooked by scholarship since it is a counterpart to work: a reverse mirror of Fordist society. However, it is also a political theory of culture.

> Media and the rise of fascism

The cartelization of culture during the Weimar Republic and its concentration in reactionary hands, personified by Alfred Hugenberg, led Adorno to consider the relationship between the media and the rise of fascism. On the one hand, radio had transformed anti-democratic agitation; on the other, the social form of the culture industry, through which subjectivities are undermined and identifications with superstars are produced, paved the way for fascist

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political leaders while appearing as "a disinterested and supra-party authority."

In *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism*, Adorno comments on the rise of the NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), whose secret of success was related to the concept of "organization." The NPD presented itself as a movement beyond any partisan sectarianism. This "movement" simulated a detachment from the traditional form of the "party," distinct from the political and economic interests that guide the institutional *Realpolitik*. Moreover, it did so through propaganda, argues Adorno. From his thought-provoking remarks, we can infer the original thesis: culture industry could be the new "organization." Such an industry can replace a mass party in structuring and diffusing fascism.

Although Adorno turned "culture industry" into a research agenda throughout his work, even he could not foresee the proportions and scope that this system could assume.

> The disinterested authority of the Internet displaces the old politics

Before the advent of the Internet, anti-democratic agitators needed to personally go to schools, churches, radio stations, factories, television studios, and so on. In all these spheres, access was governed by specific rules and was limited. Culture industry under Fordism had already been one of the main instruments of fascism by carrying, via the radio, the street agitator into the living room. However, it did not take the place of the party. The latest development of productive forces, i.e., the emergence and importance within contemporary society of social networks, has broken down any barriers to this type of agitation, delegitimizing even the most traditional means of communication and taking the traditional mass party out of the picture. Social networks exhibit more social capillarity than any organization ever yearned for.

The infrastructure in question also created the material basis of this "digital culture industry" and the "cultural" form it takes. The binary device of "like/dislike," the lock-in effect linked to the monopolization of the sector, the manipulation of emotions through targeted advertising, and many other well-known features have provided the model for virtual sociability and the forms of socialization connected to it – not to mention the use of stratagems such as bots for purposes of political manipulation in social media and networks.

Furthermore, the success of this new right-wing radicalism is due to the fact that the culture industry, in its digital version, continues to present itself as a "disinterested authority." Its economic character is hidden behind the "free nature" of its products and is made even more nebulous by the fact that we are the ones who produce and share most of the content feeding it. As a "disinterested authority," it not only presents itself as something that "hovers" above traditional parties but also becomes the ideal vehicle for right-wing movements that aim to appear as an alternative to the old politics.

> The new right-wing radicalism and social networks

Hence, there is convergence between a highly comprehensive objective apparatus and a model of subjectivation that immensely favors the extreme right. The new right-wing radicalism mobilizes a policy refractory to dialogue and reflection, which is deeply connected to the features of social networks due, for example, to: the policy of attention engagement that favors radicalization through the use of click baits with strong emotional appeal; the ability to produce the feeling of political participation; the algorithms that choose what people consume, which, in turn, produces content circularity and the exclusion of everything diverse, facilitating the formation of *in-groups* and *out-groups*. As Joseph Vogl suggests regarding platforms, the digital culture industry becomes para-democratic.

These elements, among others, enhance local authoritarianisms, whose bases can be extremely varied, expanding them to make them significant for political life. In the Global South, where democracies have been historically weakened by colonialism, the effects of culture industry can be even more profound, which reveals an underexplored facet of the concept: its imperialist unfolding. In this sense, culture industry could also be a theory of cultural imperialism.

The rise of the far-right worldwide has reignited interest in the Frankfurt School's studies of authoritarianism. Even so, 'culture industry' has not been considered an essential concept to apprehend this phenomenon. The future of critical theory (and the world) is undoubtedly linked to expansion, acute revision, and further development of how the culture industry works. And our critical task remains that of not being in accord with the world. ■

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> Towards a Critical Theory of World Society

by **Esteban Torres**, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina

Credit: Neel, Unsplash.

Illustration: Arbu, 2023.

The main experience of critical theory production in the Western hemisphere took place in Frankfurt and New York, around the Institute for Social Research (IfS), between the 1920s and 1960s. In the beleaguered heart of the IfS, the works of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse throbbed strongly. In the history of Latin America, on the other hand, the most important nucleus of critical theory creation flourished in the fields of sociology and economics in the 1960s and 1970s. There, the most outstanding authors were Raúl Prebisch, Fernando H. Cardoso, Darcy Ribeiro, and Ruy Mauro Marini. The two currents diverged significantly because the structural problems they identified differed greatly, and because the historical experiences of the intellectuals involved were radically different. The Latin American current, moreover, evolved in relation to a politics of majorities. Only recognition of the unique determining force exerted by each historical location on intellectuals and their critical theories can explain the existence of such a broad gap between two currents endowed with German DNA, which share Marx and Weber's works as their central theoretical sources.

> A historical experience and a structural problem

Every critical theory is shaped at the intersection between a historical experience and a structural problem. The differentiation between these aspects is useful for detecting when a critical theory begins to lose its capacity for knowledge, conducive critique, and social transformation. The historical experience of Nazism, and more particularly that of the Jewish extermination, caused the Frankfurtian project to identify the loss of individual freedom as the main structural problem. Without the lasting scars left by that experience, the critical theory produced by the School of Frankfurt would have been different. The problem of Lat-

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in America's structural dependence on central countries took on a theoretical and critical form at a time when the region was on the rise and when it had become clear that European recipes of peripheral countries were a complete failure. Structural dependence was a major obstacle which clashed with the optimistic experience of upward evolution. Latin American social theory becomes critical with the circumstantial loss of the industrializing battle. Still, it maintains its positive momentum based on a rational belief in the possibility of building a post-peripheral society rather than a post-capitalist one. This was neither pure negativity nor pure positivity, as put forward by Marx's teachings. I have referred to two different structural problems which persist to this day, linked to two historical experiences. Overcoming the problems of a lack of freedom and the persistence of underdevelopment requires the creation of new critical theories that account for the current historical experience of mundialization.

> ### Contemporary deviations: ahistoricism, anti-politics, and separatism

Most of the critical theories currently circulating in Latin America and Europe seem to have lost their potency. In my opinion, this has occurred due to the amplified reproduction of three dominant intellectual deviations, and of a long-standing reductionism. These are: an ahistorical deviation, an anti-political deviation, and a separatist deviation. The first has to do with ignoring the weight of situated historical experiences in the definition offered by theories of structural problems, as well as in the shaping of public research agendas. The anti-political deviation is associated with the transformation of criticism into an end in itself. And the third deviation, the separatist one, manifests itself in two opposing practices: the autonomization of critical theory from sociological research and the conduct of social studies without a critical theory of society and, above all, without a theory of capitalism. Horkheimer and Adorno called this last aspect "sociology without society". Finally, long-term reductionism is associated with the widespread reproduction of a Eurocentric view of societies. The understandable original limitation of this dominant and self-referential vision becomes irrational blindness starting from the surprising denial of the process of mundialization of societies that began its sustained march in the middle of the twentieth century, driven by the national liberation movements of the periphery, decolonization in its advanced phase and the rise of the Asian bloc.

> ### Frankfurt's encounter with Latin American sociology

The process of mundialization is the historical experience that makes it possible to bridge the gap between the Frankfurt tradition and the Latin American tradition. An initial experience of communication between the two currents could generate the basic intellectual resources to overcome the obstacles mentioned above. Properly observed, both traditions constitute antidotes against the ahistorical deviation. So, the first Horkheimer, Marcuse, and the Latin American current, all in the wake of Marx, offer instruments to counterbalance the anti-political deviation. Likewise, in an attempt to overcome the separatist deviation, the integration of the contributions of the original Frankfurt project and the penetrating critique of positivism by Adorno and Horkheimer is indispensable. And finally, to enact a reconstructive project that completely dismantles Eurocentrism, it is essential to refer to the contributions of the Latin American current.

In order to definitively overcome the abovementioned obstacles and recover the vigor of critical theory, it is necessary to promote a change of paradigm that allows for the development of new critical theories of world society. By this I mean a theoretical practice that should be conceived as an irreducible moment of a social research process, a critique that needs to be activated by a scientific engine, and then calibrated by a strategy of earthly social transformation. Moreover, it is necessary to construct the idea of a post-Eurocentric world society, conceived as a superior unity that is realized in the interaction between three planes: i) that of the relations between national, regional, and global spheres, ii) that of center/periphery relations, and iii) that of the relation between modernities and the non-modern.

The new intellectual program of the IfS, led by Stephan Lessenich, is the most ambitious navigation chart drawn up by the Frankfurt School since 1923 insofar as it defines its structural problems by inscribing itself in the historical experience of mundialization, assuming a scientific, critical, and political commitment to a process of social transformation that far exceeds Europe. ■

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> The Decarbonisation Consensus

by **Breno Bringel**, Rio de Janeiro State University, Brazil, and Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, and **Maristella Svampa**, CONICET and Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Argentina

Fly with Aerocene Pacha (Salinas Grandes and Laguna de Guayatayoc Basin, Jujuy, Argentina, 2020). Credits: Aerocene Foundation and Studio Tomás Saraceno.

In recent years, the socio-ecological transition has moved from being an issue restricted to activist groups and scientists to a central focus of contemporary political and economic agendas. However, two important questions arise here. First, in the face of the urgency of decarbonisation, there is a tendency to reduce the socio-ecological transition – an integral understanding of which should encompass the energy, production, food, and urban levels – to the energy transition. The second issue concerns how the energy transition is carried out and who will pay the costs.

The energy transition, driven mainly by big corporations and governments in the Global North towards supposedly "clean" energy, is increasing pressure on the Global South. For China, the US and Europe to move towards de-fossilisation, new sacrifice zones are being created in the global peripheries. There are several examples of this dynamic:

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the extraction of cobalt and lithium for the production of high-tech batteries for electric cars brutally affects the so-called "lithium triangle" in Latin America and North Africa; the growing demand for balsa wood, abundant in the Ecuadorian Amazon, for the construction of wind turbines demanded by China and European countries destroys communities, territories, and biodiversity; or the new bidding for mega-projects for solar panels and hydrogen infrastructure further increases land grabbing.

This process is becoming known in activism and critical scholarship as "green extractivism" or "energy colonialism": a new dynamic of capitalist extraction and appropriation of raw materials, natural goods and labour, especially in the Global South (though not exclusively), for the green energy transition. Energy colonialism is the centrepiece of a new capitalist consensus, which we will define as the decarbonisation consensus.

> What is the decarbonisation consensus?

The decarbonisation consensus is a new global agreement that advocates a shift from a fossil fuel-based energy system to a carbon-free (or low-carbon) one based on ""renewable" energies. Its leitmotiv is the fight against global warming and the climate crisis, stimulating an energy transition promoted by the electrification of consumption and digitalisation. This consensus is based on a widely accepted common goal. Who could oppose decarbonisation and climate neutrality in a world wounded by collapse? The main issue is not *what* to do, but *how* to do it.

The aims of this hegemonic decarbonisation do not include the deconcentration of the energy system, care for nature, or global climate justice, but other motivations such as attracting new financial incentives, reducing the energy dependence of some countries, expanding market niches or improving the image of companies. Decarbonisation is not seen as part of a broader process of changing the metabolic profile of society (its patterns of production, consumption, circulation of goods, and waste generation) but as an end in itself. Although the seriousness of the climate emergency is recognised, current policies are not only insufficient but also have severe negative impacts, given that the exploitation of natural resources is intensifying and the ideology of indefinite economic growth is being maintained.

The decarbonisation consensus continuously mobilises the discourse of technological potential and innovation. At the same time, it explicitly advocates "green business", "climate finance", "nature-based solutions", "climate-smart mining", "carbon markets", and various forms of speculative investment. In short, a type of transition is proposed based on a fundamentally mercantile logic and with a hyper-digitised interface, generating new commodities and sophisticated forms of social and territorial control.

Under another twist of the rhetoric of "sustainability", a new phase of environmental dispossession of the Global South is emerging, affecting the lives of millions of human beings and non-human sentient beings, further compromising biodiversity, and destroying strategic ecosystems. The Global South once again becomes a storehouse of supposedly inexhaustible resources, from which strategic minerals are extracted for the energy transition of the Global North, as well as a destination for the waste and pollution generated by this new "industrial revolution".

> Green colonialism and the double bind

The decarbonisation consensus is marked by ecological imperialism and green colonialism. It mobilises not only practices but also a neo-colonial ecological imaginary. For example, governments and companies often use the idea of "empty space" typical of imperial geopolitics. If in the past this idea, which complements the Ratzellian notion of "living space" (*Lebensraum*), generated ecocide and indigenous ethnocide – later serving to promote policies of "development" and "colonisation" of territories – today it is used to justify territorial expansionism for investment in "green" energy.

In this way, large tracts of land in sparsely populated rural areas are considered "empty spaces" suitable for constructing windmills or hydrogen plants. These geopolitical imaginaries of corporate transitions reproduce colonial relations, which cannot only be seen as an imposition from the outside in, from the North to the South. In many cases, what is at stake is also a kind of "internal green colonialism", which forges the conditions of possibility for the advance of green extractivism based on colonial alliances and relations between domestic elites and global elites. We must also recognise that in the name of the "green transition", the decarbonisation consensus also generates pressures on the Global North's territories. Still, this differs from the impacts and scale of such processes in the globalised periphery.

Moreover, the temporality and the way the decarbonisation consensus is implemented trigger contradictions even among its promoters. The worsening of schizophrenic behaviours and policies – or the *double bind*, to use Gregory Bateson's term (see his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*) – seems to be a sign of the civilisational polycrisis. There are those who, while recognising its importance, seek to delay decarbonisation by extracting every last drop of oil, as is the case with many fossil fuel companies and their lobbying of governments. One example was the announcement by US President Joe Biden, who, going back on his election promise, in March 2023 approved the Willow Project which allows the expansion of the oil frontier in the Alaskan Arctic to move forward, thereby endangering a highly fragile ecosystem that is already suffering from the melting of ice due to global warming. Another example

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comes from the European Union which, while seeking to expand the European Green Pact, opted to return to coal in mid-2022, using the energy crisis accelerated by the war in Ukraine as a pretext.

The decarbonisation consensus restricts the horizon of the fight against climate change to what Brazilian researcher Camila Moreno defines as the *carbon metric*: a limited way of quantifying carbon only based on CO_2 molecules, which offers a kind of currency for international exchange, generating the illusion that something is being done against environmental degradation. In this way, the underlying problem is covered up and not only do we continue to pollute, but pollution itself has become a new arena for business (through, for example, emissions offset trading). The natural and ecological limits of the planet continue to be ignored, as no amount of lithium or critical minerals will suffice unless mobility models and consumption patterns are changed.

Therefore, the transition cannot be reduced to solely a change in the energy matrix, guaranteeing the continuity of an unsustainable model. By proposing a short-range corporate energy transition, the decarbonisation consensus maintains the hegemonic development pattern and accelerates the metabolic fracture to preserve current lifestyles and consumption, especially in the countries of the North and the wealthiest sectors of the global economy. The kind of post-fossil logic promoted by the decarbonisation consensus thus leads to a corporate, technocratic, neo-colonial, and unsustainable transition.

> **Continuities with previous capitalist consensuses: inevitability, corporate capture, and extractivism**

Let us look at the decarbonisation consensus from the perspective of the socio-historical process. We see continuities with the previous capitalist consensuses, namely the Washington consensus and the *commodities consensus*. The first is the discourse of inevitability, which states that there is no alternative to these consensuses. The commodities consensus, for instance, was built on the idea that there was agreement on the irrevocable nature of the extractivist dynamic resulting from the growing global demand for raw materials, aiming to close off the possibility of other alternatives. Similarly, the decarbonisation consensus today seeks to forge the idea that, given the climate urgency, there is no other possible transition and that the only "realistic" one is the corporate transition.

Second, all these consensuses imply a large concentration of power in the hands of non-democratic actors (large corporations, financial actors and international organisations), thereby undermining any possibility of democratic governance, even more so in a context of "transition". There are two implications of this trend. On the one hand,

we see the corporate capture of governance spaces; arenas such as the Conference of Parties (COP), which, as the supreme body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, should be a multilateral forum to advance the fight against climate change, instead are increasingly a business fair of green capitalism that maintains energy power relations between North and South. On the other hand, there is an intense concentration of power among large companies from the beginning to the end of the global chains.

Third, the constant search for the expansion of capitalist frontiers involves promoting mega-projects aimed at controlling, extracting, and exporting natural resources. To this end, there is a clear commitment to guarantee "legal security" for capital with regulatory and legal bases that enable the highest corporate profitability. For example, the new bilateral trade agreements the European Union (EU) is negotiating have incorporated chapters on energy and raw materials, to guarantee access to critical minerals for the transition. In this context, the EU recently presented a proposal for a Critical Raw Materials Regulation (CRMR), ostensibly aimed at ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials for the EU. However, as explained in a SOMO report, the proposed EU strategy will not lead to a sustainable supply of critical minerals for Europe, as it will exacerbate risks to human rights and the environment, undermine economic dynamics in partner countries, and continue to reinforce unsustainable consumption in rich countries.

> **New features: inter-imperial competition, energy security and climate colonialism**

Beyond these lines of continuity, there are also novelties. An essential feature of the decarbonisation consensus is the complexity of neo-colonial relations in a multipolar world, marked by inter-imperial competition. It is not only the European Union, lacking critical minerals, which is seeking direct access to them. Despite having them, China is very well positioned in the Global South where for almost two decades it has been making aggressive investments in strategic extractive sectors, maintaining a different type of relationship from that of the United States and Europe.

One of the peculiarities of the new dependence that China is generating on Latin American and African countries, where it is the leading trading partner with almost all of them, is that although its investments are long-term and in different sectors (agribusiness, mining, oil, or infrastructure linked to extractive activities), in terms of technology transfer – particularly concerning the green transition – it tends to use cutting-edge Chinese technology, which sometimes also includes Chinese labour.

The inter-imperial bidding is completed with the United States. Although these issues seem to be absent from

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State Department statements, on several occasions the head of the Southern Command, Laura Richardson, has made clear the strategic interest the United States has in South America (in terms of water, oil, and lithium, among others). Finally, let us add that Russia, as a tendentially hegemonic actor in a multipolar world, is far from having the reach of the aforementioned powers in the field of the dispute over the energy transition.

Another significant distinguishing element between these three consensuses is the role of the state. We know that a minimal state logic marked the Washington consensus, and the commodity consensus upheld a moderately regulatory state but in close alliance with transnational capital. In turn, the decarbonisation consensus seems to inaugurate the emergence of a new type of planning neo-statism – in some cases closer to an eco-corporate state – that combines green transition with the promotion of public–private funds and the financialisation of nature. Green transitions driven by government institutions and the state tend to approach, facilitate, and merge with corporate transitions in a dynamic of public sector submission to private interests. However, in some cases with intense protest cycles, the state may seek to regain relative autonomy by promoting eco-social transitions that encourage decentralisation and deconcentration of corporate power.

Likewise, although the commodities consensus and the decarbonisation consensus have an extractivist logic, the range of products and minerals required has broadened. In the first case, they are fundamentally food products, hydrocarbons, and minerals such as copper, gold, silver, tin, bauxite, and zinc; while in the second, in addition, the focus of interest is on the so-called critical minerals needed for the energy transition, such as lithium, cobalt, graphite, and indium, among others, as well as rare earths. In both cases, the extraction and export of raw materials have catastrophic consequences in terms of ecological destruction and generation of dependency. However, a crucial aspect that differentiates green extractivism from prior extractivism is the discourse used to legitimise it, as the actors promoting it claim that it is sustainable and the only possible way to address the climate emergency.

In sum, it is essential to grasp the shifts in meaning that the climate and ecological question has undergone in recent years. Beyond the classic enemies, the decarbonisation consensus is emerging as a more complex and sophisticated framework that social movements and alternatives must confront and deal with. ■

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> Energy Transition in North Africa:
Colonialism, Dispossession, and Expropriation

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Ouarzazate Solar Power Station, Morocco. Credit: iStock, 2022.

Some transitions to renewable energy can be extractivist and maintain existing dispossession practices, dependencies, and hegemonies. A few examples from the North African region (particularly in Morocco) come to mind. They all show how energy colonialism is reproduced through green colonialism or green grabbing.

Morocco's goal to increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix to 52% by 2030, in terms of installed capacity, is laudable. However, critical assessment has to be undertaken if what really matters to us is not just any kind of transition but rather a "just transi-

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tion" that benefits the impoverished and marginalised in society, instead of deepening their socio-economic exclusion.

The Ouarzazate Solar Plant was launched in 2016, just before the climate talks (COP22) held in Marrakesh. It was praised as the world's largest solar plant, and the Moroccan monarchy was declared a champion of renewable energies. But scratching the surface a little reveals a different picture. First, the plant was installed on land (3,000 hectares) of Amazigh agro-pastoralist communities without their approval or consent; this constitutes a land grab for a supposedly green agenda (a "green grab"). Second, this mega project is controlled by private interests and has been built through contracting a massive debt of 9 billion USD from the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and others. This debt is backed by Moroccan government guarantees, which potentially means more public debt for an already overburdened country. Third, the project is not as green as it claims to be. Using concentrated solar power (CSP) requires considerable use of water to cool and clean the panels. In a semi-arid region like Ouarzazate, diverting water from use for drinking and agriculture is just outrageous.

The "Noor Midelt" project constitutes Phase II of Morocco's solar power plan and aims to provide more energy capacity than the Ouarzazate plant. It is a hybrid CSP and photovoltaic (PV) power plant. With 800 MW planned for its first phase, it will be one of the world's most significant solar projects that combine CSP and PV technologies. In May 2019, a consortium of EDF Renewables (France), Masdar (UAE), and Green of Africa (Moroccan conglomerate) became the successful bidder and was selected to construct and operate the facility in partnership with the Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN) for 25 years. The project has contracted more than 2 billion USD in debts from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the French Development Agency, and KfW.

The project started in 2019, while commissioning is expected in 2024. The Noor Midelt solar complex will be developed on a 4,141-hectare site on the Haute Moulouya Plateau in central Morocco, approximately 20 kilometres northeast of the town of Midelt. A total of 2,714 hectares was managed as communal/collective land by the three ethnic agrarian communities of Ait Oufella, Ait Rahou Ouali, and Ait Massoud Ouali. At the same time, approximately 1,427 hectares was declared forest land and managed by the communities. However, the land has been confiscated from its owners under national laws and regulations allowing expropriation to serve the public interest. The administrative court decision in January 2017 granted the expropriation in favour of MASEN, and the court decision was publicly disclosed in March 2017.

> A colonial environmental narrative

Reminiscent of an ongoing colonial environmental narrative that labels the lands to be expropriated as marginal and underutilised, and therefore available for investing in green energy, the World Bank, in a study conducted in 2018, stressed that "the sandy and arid terrain allows only for small scrubs to grow, and the land is unsuitable for agricultural development due to lack of water". This narrative was also used when promoting the Ouarzazate plant in the early 2010s. One person back then stated:

"The project people talk about this as a desert that is not used, but to the people here, it is not a desert, it is a pasture. It is their territory, and their future is in the land. When you take my land, you take my oxygen."

The World Bank report does not stop there but asserts that "the land acquisition for the project will have no impacts on the livelihood of local communities". However, the transhumant pastoralist tribe of Sidi Ayad, who have been using the land to graze animals for centuries, beg to differ. Hassan El Ghazi, a young shepherd, declared in 2019 to an activist from ATTAC Morocco:

"Our profession is pastoralism, and now this project has occupied our land where we graze our sheep. They do not employ us in the project, but they employ foreigners. The land in which we live has been occupied. They are destroying the houses that we build. We are oppressed, and the Sidi Ayad region is being oppressed. Its children are oppressed, and their rights and the rights of our ancestors have been lost. We are 'illiterates' who do not know how to read and write… The children you see did not go to school… Roads and paths are cut off… In the end, we are invisible and we do not exist for them. We demand that officials pay attention to our situation and our regions. We do not exist with such policies, and it is better to die, it is better to die!"

> Protests and resistance

In this context of dispossession, misery, underdevelopment and social injustice, the people of Sidi Ayad have been voicing their discontent since 2017 through several protests. In February 2019, they carried out an open sit-in, leading to the arrest of Said Oba Mimoun, a member of the Union of Small Farmers and Forest Workers, who was sentenced to twelve months in jail.

Mostepha Abou Kbir, another trade unionist who has been supporting the struggle of the Sidi Ayad tribe, described how the land was enclosed without the approval of the local communities who have been enduring decades of socio-economic exclusion. It has been fenced in, and no one is allowed to approach. He contrasts the mega-devel-

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opment projects of the Moroccan state with the inexistent basic infrastructure in Sidi Ayad. Moreover, he points to another dimension of the enclosure and resource grab: the decimation of water resources in the Drâa-Tafilalet region for the sake of these enormous projects (the Midelt solar plant will be fed from the nearby Hassan II dam) that local communities complain they do not benefit from. In this challenging context in which small herd owners are being driven out while wealth is concentrated in a few hands, along with the commoditisation of the livestock market and chronic droughts, the Midelt solar project stands to exacerbate the threat to the livelihoods of these pastoralist communities and worsen their marginalisation.

Not only have Sidi Ayad communities been voicing concerns about this project. Some women from the Soulaliyate movement have also been demanding their right to access land in the Drâa-Tafilalet region and demanded appropriate compensation for their ancestral land on which the solar plant has been built. "Soulaliyate women" refers to tribal women in Morocco who live on collective land. The Soulaliyate women's movement began in the early 2000s and arose in response to the intense commodification and privatisation of communal lands. Tribal women demanded equal rights and shares when their land was privatised or divided. Despite intimidation, arrests, and even sieges by public authorities, the movement has spread nationwide and women from different regions have rallied behind the banner of equality and justice.

Despite all these concerns and injustices, the project is going ahead, protected by the monarchy, its repressive regime, and its propaganda tools. The logic of externalising socio-ecological costs and displacing them through space and time, characteristic of the extractivist drive of capitalism, has no end.

> ### Green colonialism and occupation in Western Sahara

While some of the projects in Morocco, like the Ouarzazate Solar Plant and Noor Midelt, qualify as 'green grabbing', the appropriation of land and resources for purportedly environmental ends, similar renewable (solar and wind) projects taking place in Western Sahara's occupied territories can aptly be labelled "green colonialism" as they are carried out despite the Saharawis and on their occupied land.

Green colonialism can be defined as the extension of the colonial relations of plunder and dispossession (as well as the dehumanisation of the other) to the green era of renewable energies, with the accompanying displacement of socio-environmental costs to peripheral countries and communities. The same system is in place, but with a different energy source, moving from fossil fuels to green energy. The same global energy-intensive production and consumption patterns are maintained, and the same political, economic, and social structures that generate inequality, impoverishment, and dispossession remain untouched.

At present, there are three operational wind farms in occupied Western Sahara. A fourth is under construction in Boujdour, while several are still at the planning stage. Combined, these wind farms will have a capacity of over 1000 MW. These wind farms are part of the portfolio of Nareva, the wind energy company that belongs to the Moroccan royal family's holding company. Some 95% of the energy that the Moroccan state-owned phosphate company OCP needs to exploit Western Sahara's non-renewable phosphate reserves in Bou Craa is generated by windmills. A total of 22 Siemens wind turbines generate renewable energy at the 50 MW Foum el Oued farm, which has been operational since 2013.

In November 2016, at the time of the UN Climate Talks COP22, Saudi-Arabia's ACWA Power signed an agreement with MASEN to develop and operate a complex of three photovoltaic (PV) solar power stations, totalling 170 MW. Two of these power stations (operational today), totalling 100 MW, are, however, not located in Morocco, but inside the occupied territory (El Aaiún and Boujdour). Plans have also been made for a third solar plant at El Argoub, near Dakhla. These renewable projects are being used to entrench the occupation by deepening Morocco's ties to the occupied territories, with the complicity of foreign capital and companies.

In such a context, it is fundamentally important to scratch beneath the surface of the language of "cleanliness", "shininess", and "carbon emission cuts" and to observe and scrutinise the materiality of the transition towards renewable energy. What seems to unite all these projects and the hype around them is a deeply erroneous assumption that any move toward renewable energy is to be welcomed and that any shift from fossil fuels, regardless of how it is carried out, is worthwhile. We need to say it clearly: the climate crisis we are currently facing is not attributable to fossil fuels per se but rather to their unsustainable and destructive use to fuel the capitalist machine. So, a green and just transition must fundamentally transform and decolonise our global economic system, which is not fit for purpose at the social, ecological, or even biological level. ■

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> Green and Internal Colonialism

in Africa

by **Nnimmo Bassey**, Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Nigeria

Mining in Africa. Credit: iStock, Africanway, 2012.

Green colonialism is an extension and a merger of political, economic, and socio-cultural colonialism. It has been built and cemented on the deep-seated coloniality through which African leaders have been programmed to believe, for example, in the international system of heritage conservation. Such leaders have utilised so-called international or alien standards to promote their interests. Besides fortress conservation, colonialism sold the local elites the idea of looking to external economies for cash in exchange for natural materials and labour. Neo-colonial states continue this pattern of seeking foreign direct investment (FDI) which primarily extracts labour and raw materials and gives them foreign exchange whose value is set remotely.

Examples of how colonies got trapped in these foreign exchange dead ends can be seen in plantation agricul-

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ture, which shifted from cropping for food to cropping for cash. Cash crop agriculture in the colonial era continued exploitative agricultural systems built under slavery. Today, plantation agriculture continues to produce export crops, triggering land grabs and preventing farmers from producing food for their communities. To complicate matters, besides feeding external markets, plantations and monocropping now also provide biofuels for machines or bioenergy. Whether in the agricultural, mining, or fossil fuel sectors, African leaders mainly pursue foreign exchange, at prices they play no role in setting.

Structures erected by colonialism and the postcolonial era dramatically altered the socio-economic and political dynamics of the African continent. The seeds of rent seeking were sown by colonialism and watered by the manipulations of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Debt has also been a tool used to alter developmental imaginaries and pressure countries into opening up more to plunder. Governments are pressured to service external debts, meet import requirements, and give transnational corporations liberal economic conditions, including tax breaks, labour quotas, and the freedom to repatriate all profits in their transactions. They also engage in incestuous partnerships with these corporations, making it impossible to institute severe regulatory oversight. The unwillingness of governments and their inability to control the actions of corporations have led to ecocidal exploitation, which has already created dead zones in some areas.

The consolidation of the freedom to exploit has also been aided by the creation of free trade or special economic zones, which have been characterised as enclaves of exception. One class of free trade zone (FTZ) is the export-processing zone (EPZ), usually set up in developing countries by their governments to promote industrial and commercial exports. Many countries consider those zones the primary stimuli for attracting foreign direct investment. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reports that there are over 200 special economic zones (SEZs) spread across 38 African countries. It also notes that at least 56 further zones are under construction, and others are still at an early stage of development. About 150,000 hectares of land in Africa is dedicated to SEZs, while over US$2.6 billion have been mobilised in investments into agro-processing, manufacturing, and services.

The regime of extraction for foreign exchange has been a never-ending story of subtraction, adding scant value to the people or planet. Perfunctory voluntary human rights principles and transparency initiatives help corporations greenwash their activities and export dirt via corrupt politicians. This unfortunate situation was foreseen by Frantz Fanon when he noted in his classic book *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonialism contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources which it extracts and exports to meet the needs of the mother country's industries, thereby, allowing specific sectors of the colony to become relatively wealthy. "But the rest of the colony follows its path of under-development and poverty, or at all events, sinks into it more deeply" (p.106).

Fanon saw how colonial structures fragment nations and widen subjectivities that put the brakes on efforts to build African unity. Fanon clarifies how members of the political elite get to see themselves as producers of niches of opportunity for their nations and rent seeking as the engine of progress. This explains why current leaders are so stuck on defending the position that exploiting fossil fuels and other minerals for export/cash is a right that cannot be negotiated. This dynamic also specifies that ecocide must be accepted as omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs.

Rapacious exploitation requires a thorough rethinking of development. The role of the World Bank and the IMF in enforcing the defunding of social services, including health, education, and economic supports, through their infamous structural adjustment programmes, stands out as colonial manipulation that upended common sense, reversed progress, instituted poverty, and constructed underdevelopment. The perverse influence of these institutions underscores the need to pay close attention to the inequalities in power, using an eco-socialist and anticolonial lens.

> **The scramble for fossils**

In the case of the scramble for African oil and gas, the leaders see only an opportunity for their countries to benefit from fast-tracked projects. The argument is that expanded production will boost energy access for their people, even though this is a fatuous claim given that decades of extraction have yielded only ecological devastation and poverty.

The fixation on colonial trade had built what may also be termed voodoo economics. In this system, cash flows in with little production or transformation of raw materials. This dynamic has entrenched a culture of rentism or dependency whereby African countries depend on multinational extractive corporations for national revenue. Unsurprisingly, oil revenues represent at least 20% of GDP in Libya, Algeria, Gabon, Chad, Angola, and The Republic of Congo. Furthermore, although oil and gas contribute a modest 6% of the real GDP of Nigeria, they account for 95% of foreign exchange income and 80% of government revenue. The African Union group of nations used the COP27 climate negotiations in Sharm-el-Sheikh in 2022 to lobby for the expansion of fossil fuel production in order to benefit from vast natural resources, as richer nations have supposedly done. Their argument is bereft of critical examination of the appropriation and externalisation

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mechanisms that made it possible for the richer nations to benefit from those resources.

The root of the resource grab in Africa cannot be extricated from colonialism, as this is what provided the base for impunity without fear of being held accountable. Plunder and impunity have grown, with brutal force when necessary. This means that the maps of natural resources and conflicts on the continent overlap almost perfectly. Exploitation has been backed by national armies, special security agents, and mercenaries. Extraction is literally carried out behind military shields, ignoring human and collective rights.

Patrick Bond, a political ecologist, aptly captures the troubling situation of the endless push for fossil fuels in the face of global warming invoking the role of France, South Africa, and Rwanda. "Total's current operations in Africa follow an old pattern: fossil fuel exploitation and corruption of developing country economies, governments, societies and environments, all backed by French state power." As support for his assertion, he states that: "Emmanuel Macron [the president of France] made this abundantly clear in 2021 when he insisted on defending Total's US$20 billion gas assets in Mozambique through military intervention, led by Rwandan and South African soldiers. Pretoria's sub-imperialist role explains its desperate support for the new oil tycoons with whom Total has been allied since the mid-2010s to exploit large gas reserves and search for new deposits by seismic blasting."

Bond notes that two forms of resistance have emerged against the revival of fossil imperialism and sub-imperialism along this axis since 2021: violent conflict that has shaken Total, the French oil and gas giant; and environmental and social mobilisations on the South African coastline that have rattled that country's government.

The role of France, a country that maintains a strict colonial grip on Francophone nations in Africa, is especially interesting. While it has outlawed fracking and crude oil extraction in its territories and has also banned fossil fuel advertisements, its oil and gas behemoth, TotalEnergies, continues to extract elsewhere and most notoriously at Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, from where the first shipment of fossil gas took place as COP27 was happening in Sharm El Sheikh. The timing of the first shipment illustrates how violence has not stopped resource extraction in Africa, as they often go hand in hand. This is epitomised by cases of blood diamonds of Liberia and the ongoing instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Total is one of Cabo Delgado's most significant players when it comes to gas extraction. The onshore Afungi LNG Park, built for the fossil business, displaced over 550 families to build a 70-kilometre road to the Park, which has an aerodrome as well as treatment plants and port facilities. Coastal fishing communities have been displaced to a "relocation village" that is more than 10 km inland, effectively cutting them off from the sea and denying them their farmlands, fishing grounds, general livelihoods, culture, and everything that matters to coastal communities. Cabo Delgado hosts Africa's three largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects: the Mozambique LNG Project (Total, formerly Anadarko) with a value of US$20bn, Coral FLNG Project (ENI and ExxonMobil) with a value of US$4.7bn, and Rovuma LNG Project (ExxonMobil, ENI and CNPC) valued at US$30bn. Cabo Delgado may be the site of one of the continent's biggest corporate-made disasters.

In November 2022, Justiça Ambiental hosted a meeting on corporate impunity in Maputo with over 100 community persons from all over Mozambique. During the meeting, a community person declared very poignantly: "For us, the multinational corporations did not bring development, they brought disgrace." Substitute "multinational corporations" by "colonialism" and a fuller picture emerges. Another delegate at the meeting wondered if the destruction of their land could be called development. He then asked rhetorically: "Is that the development we want?"

Colonialism, whether black, blue, or green, never consults the people. This lack of consultation is bred by an ingrained lack of respect for the people and planet. Playing the colonial game, areas where Total, the oil and gas company, operates are suffering from the rise of social inequalities and the resultant divisions, with the only unifying factor being that they are generally known as Total Areas. ◾

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> South-South Manifesto
for an Ecosocial Energy Transition*

Manifesto from the Peoples of the South:
FOR AN ECOSOCIAL ENERGY TRANSITION

Credit: Pacto Ecosocial e Intercultural del Sur.

More than two years after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – and now alongside the catastrophic consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine – a "new normal" has emerged. This new global status quo reflects a worsening of various crises: social, economic, political, ecological, bio-medical, and geopolitical.

Environmental collapse approaches. Everyday life has become ever more militarized. Access to good food, clean water, and affordable healthcare has become even more restricted. More governments have turned autocratic. The wealthy have become wealthier, the powerful more powerful, and unregulated technology has only accelerated these trends.

The engines of this unjust status quo – capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, and various fundamentalisms – are worsening a bad situation. Therefore, we must urgently debate and implement new visions of ecosocial transition

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and transformation that are gender-just, regenerative, and popular.

> Our diagnosis

In this *Manifesto of Peoples of the South: For an Ecosocial Energy Transition*, we hold that the problems of the Global South are different from those of the Global North and rising powers such as China. Not only does an imbalance of power between these two realms persist because of an enduring colonial legacy, but it has deepened because of a neocolonial energy model. In the context of climate change, ever-rising energy needs, and biodiversity loss, the capitalist centres have stepped up the pressure to extract natural wealth and rely on cheap labour from the countries on the periphery. Not only is the well-known extractive paradigm still in place, but the North's ecological debt to the South is rising.

What's new are the "clean energy transitions" of the Global North that have put even more pressure on the Global South to yield cobalt and lithium to produce high-tech batteries, balsa wood for wind turbines, land for large solar arrays, and new infrastructure for hydrogen megaprojects. This decarbonization of the rich, which is market-based and export-oriented, depends on a new phase of environmental despoliation of the Global South, which affects the lives of millions of women, men, and children, not to mention non-human life. In this way, the Global South has once again become a zone of sacrifice, a basket of purportedly inexhaustible resources for the countries of the Global North.

A priority for the Global North has been to secure global supply chains, especially of critical raw materials, and prevent certain countries, like China, from monopolizing access. The G7 trade ministers, for instance, recently championed a responsible, sustainable, and transparent supply chain for critical minerals via international cooperation, policy, and finance, including the facilitation of trade in environmental goods and services through the World Trade Organization. The Global North has pushed for more trade and investment agreements with the Global South to satisfy its need for resources, particularly those integral to "clean energy transitions." These agreements, designed to reduce barriers to trade and investment, protect and enhance corporate power and rights by potentially subjecting states to legal suits according to investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms. The Global North uses these agreements to control the "clean energy transition" and create a new colonialism.

Meanwhile, the South's governments have fallen into a debt trap, borrowing money to build up industries and large-scale agriculture to supply the North. To repay these debts, governments have felt compelled to extract more resources, creating a vicious circle of inequality. Today, the imperative to move beyond fossil fuels without significantly reducing consumption in the North has only increased pressure to exploit these natural resources. Moreover, as it moves ahead with its energy transitions, the North has paid only lip service to its responsibility to address its historical and rising ecological debt to the South.

Minor changes in the energy matrix are not enough. The entire energy system must be transformed from production and distribution to consumption and waste. Substituting electric vehicles for internal-combustion cars is insufficient, for the whole transportation model needs to change, with a reduction in energy consumption and the promotion of sustainable options. Relations must become more equitable not only between the centre and periphery countries but also *within* countries, between elites and the public. Corrupt elites in the Global South have also collaborated in this unjust system by profiting from extraction, repressing human rights and environmental defence, and perpetuating economic inequality. Rather than being solely technological, the solutions to these interlocking crises are, above all, political.

> A just transition for the Global South

As activists, intellectuals, and organizations from different countries of the Global South, we call on change agents from all parts of the world to commit to a radical, democratic, gender-just, regenerative, and grassroots ecosocial transition that transforms both the energy sector and the industrial and agricultural spheres that depend on large-scale energy inputs. According to the different movements for climate justice, "transition is inevitable, but justice is not."

We still have time to start a just and democratic transition. We can transition away from the neoliberal economic system in a direction that sustains life; combines social justice with environmental justice; brings together egalitarian and democratic values with a resilient, holistic social policy; and restores an ecological balance necessary for a healthy planet. But to do so, we need more political imagination and more utopian visions of another society that is socially just and respects our common house.

The energy transition should be part of a comprehensive vision that addresses radical inequality in the distribution of energy resources and advances energy democracy. It should de-emphasize large-scale institutions – corporate agriculture, huge energy companies – and market-based solutions. Instead, it must strengthen the resilience of civil society and social organizations.

> Our statements

Therefore, we make the following eight points:
1. We warn that an energy transition led by corporate megaprojects from the Global North and accepted by nu-

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merous governments in the Global South entails the enlargement of the zones of sacrifice throughout the Global South, and the persistence of the colonial legacy, patriarchy, and the debt trap. Energy is an elemental and inalienable human right, and energy democracy should be our goal.

2. We call on the peoples of the Global South to reject false solutions that come with new forms of energy colonialism, now in the name of a "green transition." We make a specific call to continue political coordination among the peoples of the South while also pursuing strategic alliances with critical sectors in the North.

3. To mitigate the havoc of the climate crisis and advance a just and popular ecosocial transition, we demand repayment of the ecological debt. In the face of the disproportionate Global North's responsibility for the climate crisis and environmental collapse, this means effectively implementing a compensation system for the Global South. This system should include a considerable transfer of funds and appropriate technology and consider sovereign debt cancellation for the countries of the Global South. We support reparations for loss and damage experienced by Indigenous peoples, vulnerable groups and local communities due to mining, large-scale dams, and dirty energy projects.

4. We reject the expansion of the hydrocarbon border in our countries – through fracking and offshore projects – and repudiate the hypocritical discourse of the European Union, which recently declared natural gas and nuclear energy to be "clean energies." As already proposed in the Yasuni Initiative in Ecuador in 2007 and today supported by many social sectors and organizations, we endorse leaving fossil fuels underground and generating the social and labour conditions necessary to abandon extractivism and move toward a post-fossil-fuel future.

5. We similarly reject "green colonialism" in the form of land grabs for solar and wind farms, the indiscriminate mining of critical minerals, and the promotion of technologi-

cal "fixes" like blue, green, and grey hydrogen. Enclosure, exclusion, violence, encroachment, and entrenchment have characterized past and current North–South energy relations and are not acceptable in an era of ecosocial transition.

6. We demand genuine protection of defenders of the environment and human rights, particularly Indigenous peoples and women, who are at the forefront of resisting extractivism.

7. Our fundamental objectives should include elimination of energy poverty in the countries of the Global South – and parts of the Global North – through alternative, decentralized, equitably distributed renewable energy projects owned and operated by communities.

8. We denounce international trade agreements that penalize countries that want to curb fossil fuel extraction. We must bring an end to trade and investment agreements controlled by multinational corporations that ultimately promote more extraction and reinforce neocolonialism.

Our ecosocial alternative is based on countless struggles, strategies, proposals, and community-based initiatives. Our Manifesto connects with Indigenous peoples' lived experiences, critical perspectives, and other local communities, women, and youth throughout the Global South. It is inspired by the work on the rights of nature, *buen vivir*, *vivir sabroso*, *sumac kawsay*, *ubuntu*, *swaraj*, the commons, the care economy, agroecology, food sovereignty, post-extractivism, the pluriverse, autonomy, and energy sovereignty. Above all, we call for a radical, democratic, popular, gender-just, regenerative, and comprehensive ecosocial transition.

Following in the footsteps of the Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South, this Manifesto proposes a dynamic platform that invites you to join our shared struggle for transformation by helping to create collective visions and collective solutions. ■

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> The Need for a Renewed
Theory of Authority (and Authoritarianism)

by **Kathya Araujo**, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile and member of ISA Research Committee on Sociological Theory (RC16)

Credit: Freepik.

Authority – and the ways in which it is exercised – is a problem that is as topical as it is urgent. The concerns surrounding this issue include phenomena ranging from social support for authoritarian regimes, authoritarianism itself, teachers' difficulties in exercising authority in schools or the management of urban spaces, to tensions within families. The urgency and the risks contained in the social and political phenomena we are witnessing today suggest that we must address this issue with greater precision from sociology, and we need to do so with the appropriate tools. However, sociological studies on the exercise of authority have so far been scarce; above all, there needs to be more renewal of the notion of authority in theoretical terms.

The question of authority constituted a very early focus of interest in social theory, and the most influential author in the study of this phenomenon was Max Weber. The understanding Weber offered – based on the idea that a belief in legitimacy sustains authority – has remained the most influential in social theory and empirical studies. However, as I discuss here, it is not advisable to maintain the hegemony of this conception for two reasons. First,

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the thesis of authority via legitimacy only allows us to capture this phenomenon in today's societies partially. Second, it can only account for a particular exercise of authority specific to certain social realities.

Let us start by considering the first of these two reasons: the scope of the thesis of authority via legitimacy for studying today's societies. As we know, Weber considered that at the heart of the dynamics of authority is the belief in legitimacy, that is, belief in the well-foundedness of command or the exercise of power. Belief in legitimacy allows for consensual exercise, which is fundamental to understanding its stability and permanence. Weber developed a notion of authority, understanding hierarchies as stable and relatively durable over time. Hence, his theory accounts for a type of exercise of authority that still has some foundations and support based on institutions, traditions, or generally shared values. Such an exercise of authority has the following characteristics: a) it is linked to a conception of hierarchies as stable and enduring; b) obedience is grounded on a syntonic relationship of ego to command; c) it is based on a relatively stable picture of power distribution between groups (men over women, adults over children, etc.); d) it is exercised primarily in a relational intersubjective manner; and e) it is supported by mediating roles between community members and between community members and things in the world.

> ## Challenging the classic model of authority

Several transformative social currents have challenged such a model of the exercise of authority. I will briefly mention five that have impacted many societies and how individuals conceive of hierarchies and authority.

The first current is linked to the pluralisation of moral orders, beliefs, and values. This tendency has contributed to weakening the typical support for authority. But it also breaks apart the theoretical demand for the existence of common and shared beliefs as a support for legitimacy.

The second current is the constant expansion and deepening of the normative principles of equality and autonomy. A significant consequence of these processes has been the questioning of hierarchies and their condition of stability and durability, which is what the Weberian thesis takes as its explanatory assumption.

The third consists of the intense processes of individualisation related to an increased resistance to subordination to the will of another. There is an apparent tension between the demand to emphasise individuality and its singularity, and the need for intersubjective obedience or compliance. Therefore, the ego-syntonic dimension considered central to the legitimacy thesis becomes tense.

Fourth, shifts in power allocations between groups have challenged traditional ways of structuring hierarchies and their management, for example, the patriarchal model of authority. They have also produced a more conflictual and contested scenario, undermining support for the stability of hierarchies.

The fifth current has to do with technological developments. These have challenged relational authority's weight by introducing new factual authority principles. In doing so, they bring the relational and strongly intersubjective character assumed by the Weberian thesis into tension. But they also question the mediating role of authority figures such as doctors or teachers.

In short, these new currents question authority as we used to know and conceive it, but, in doing so, they also question constitutive dimensions of the notion of authority as portrayed by the thesis of authority via legitimacy.

> ## Rethinking authority via legitimacy

The thesis of authority via legitimacy can also be questioned from a second perspective, along with the socio-historical challenges of the currents just mentioned. My research on the case of Chile reveals that there has not been only one modality of exercising authority; various modalities need to fit into the explanation offered by the legitimacy thesis.

My findings show that the exercise of authority in Chile has historically been based less on the conditions for consensual obedience (as in the Weberian model). In the Chilean case, the exercise of authority does not involve legitimation, that is, efforts to strengthen the belief in legitimacy. Instead, there is a strategic concern to make the other obey. In this case, what sustains authority is that the one exercising authority evidences his (or her) capacity or ability to make himself (or herself) obeyed. The test of authority is the behavioural effect it has.

To the extent that there is little concern for achieving reconciled consent, obedience is often not ego-syntonic. Rather, it is usually the result of strategic evaluations which are pragmatic and based on the interactive capacity of the actors. This is contrary to Weber, for whom interest could never be the basis of belief in legitimacy and thus the foundation of authority.

This historical type of exercise of authority in Chile tends to generate unstable and fragile authority relations, which in turn demand a more severe use of what might be called "strong authority". When authority must be exercised, there is a conviction that only a discretionary and "strong" exercise will guarantee its effectiveness. Thus, contrary to the Weberian thesis of legitimacy, which aims precisely to conceal the force or power involved, this kind of exercise of authority consists in displaying signs of the strength of the person exercising it, for example, a speech that is "strong" or "clipped" gestures and so on.

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This is a historical modality of the exercise of authority proper to a historically vertical society with rigid and naturalised hierarchies, which currently clashes with a new dialogic-democratic normative model of authority (and which is also distant from the model of belief in legitimacy). However, it is still a widespread model of authority in society as it is considered indispensable today and the only one that guarantees obedience.

Thus, my research shows that there are different modalities of exercising authority according to social realities and that they are related to the ways in which each society solves the problem of managing the asymmetries of power among its members. These different modalities of authority should not be considered deviations from a norm but rather as particular historical solutions that must be understood within each society's structural characteristics, dynamics, and social logic.

> **Towards an interactive and situated approach to the exercise of authority**

The two lines of argument that I have developed concerning the limits of the theory of authority via legitimacy converge in one need: to renew our theoretical, and therefore conceptual and methodological, approaches. One proposal in this sense is contained in the interactive and relational approach, which I have developed and tested in a set of empirical studies.

First, this approach proposes that we think of authority as one among many social mechanisms (politeness, civility, sociability, etc.) for managing power asymmetries that shape social life in societies constitutively traversed by power asymmetries. This allows us to move away from the false dichotomy of authority in social theory as a simple mechanism of integration or a pure instrument of domination.

Second, it proposes that we undo the close relationship between the notion of hierarchy and hierarchical order and, therefore, the conception of hierarchies as durable, permanent, and rigid. This is because this form of understanding hinders the intelligibility of the management of power asymmetries in more mobile societies, with more transversal chains of power distribution and more significant alternation in the occupation of places of authority. In contrast, it proposes that we start from a conception of hierarchies as mobile with diffuse and transitory borders.

Third, it suggests that the foundations of authority and the reasons for obedience, and therefore the purely representational dimension in the study of authority, should be less important as an object of analysis. We are at a time when explanations based on foundational components (foundations) and performances based on normative consensus (such as the theory of legitimacy based on representations) are showing their limits. This novel approach, therefore, places the analytical emphasis on the exercise of authority. Analysing this interaction can provide comprehensive keys to understanding authority in societies characterised by alternation, contingency, and plurality.

Fourth, it no longer conceives authority as exhibiting the compact homogeneity that is usually derived from the theory of legitimacy, largely thanks to the notion of "ideal type" used by Weber. The suggested approach proposes that we consider authority as a particular solution found by societies with specific structural and historical features, which faces different demands for its exercise depending on historical moments, the social sphere in question (family, politics, work, or others), and the social position occupied.

In short, we urgently need to renew our tools for studying authority. And, in this sense, as the results of my empirical and theoretical research indicate, we need to move from an approach based on "belief in legitimacy" to an interactive and situated approach to the exercise of authority that can account for how social actors today solve the problem of managing power asymmetries in different societies. ◼

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> The Politics of Fear
and the Authoritarian Political Imagination

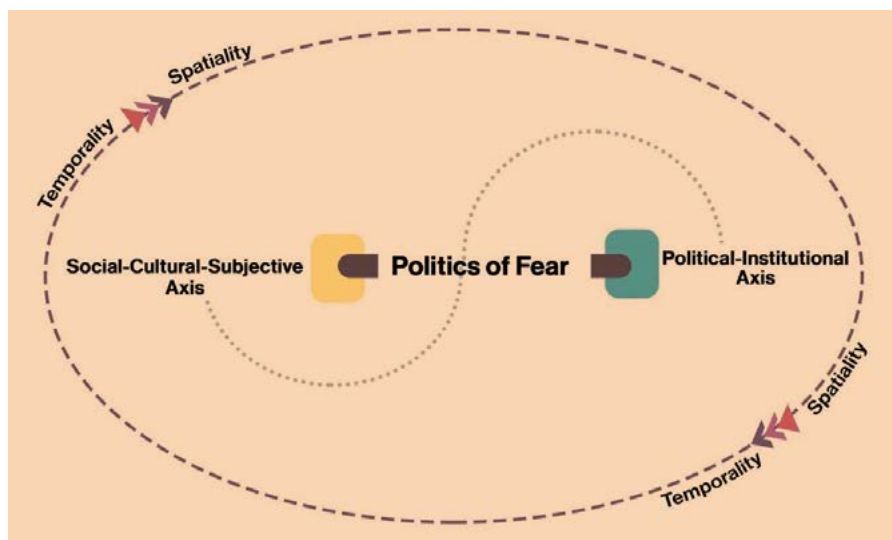by **Lara Sartorio Gonçalves**, IESP-UERJ, Rio de Janeiro State University, Brazil

Image created by the author to illustrate that the apparent oxymoron of the politics of fear is entangled in temporal and spatial amalgams that structure two other fundamental layers of its manifestation: the political-institutional layer and the socio-cultural-subjective layer.

One of the most prominent words over the last decade has been "fear." Here I refer to the multidimensionality of fear: of urban violence; of our bodies being violated; of state violence; of social injustice; of the future; and even existential fear. Reactivity combined with the survival instinct of living under the imminence of a global collapse has made fear a compass for political behavior and the constitution of social bonds. What I will call the "politics of fear" includes aspects that go beyond its recent emergence (notably expressed in the global rise of the far right and its instrumentalization of fear). A comprehensive perspective suggests we are witnessing the agency of far-right political groups – as is the case with Bolsonarism in Brazil, which I have studied – but also societal tendencies that accommodate the authoritarian political imagination and the socio-historical-existential anchors of fear.

> ### Between the visible and the invisible

A perspective that does not reject movement, folds, and entanglements of multifaceted elements, but explores the multiplicity of what is reiterated, experienced, and accumulated not only on a mental level but also in muscles, blood, and impulses is what I claim as the *practice of fissures*. Graphically, the politics of fear is malleable to the fluidity. Separations are merely didactic and analytical, and there are porosities between elements. It is worth noting that not even institutions, individuals, collectives, and companies are cohesive and unidirectional actors. The politics of fear is constitutive of modern politics and, in a broader definition, signifies the set of mechanisms that mediate the transformation of fear – whether produced or mobilized – into an impetus for social cohesion.

The pervasiveness of fear is a political affect which is a dynamic vector in the constitution of social bonds, while it also legitimizes social exclusions and animosities. The apparent oxymoron of the politics of fear is entangled in temporal and spatial amalgams. By this, I mean memory; aesthetics; architecture; militarized urban planning, infrastructures, and their social abysses; processes of digitization and the acceleration of time; the experience of borders and the geolocation of fear; and colonial and urban violence, among other aspects.

The experience of fear differs according to geometries of power, primarily involving race, gender, and class (which constitute the matrix of fear and social enemies). For example, in territories where violence particularly emanates from the state through the police, such as in the Brazilian *favelas*, the fear of uniformed agents is significantly greater than in the city, where the military often inspires a sense of security.

Within the fissures of the politics of fear, there are two axes: political-institutional and socio-cultural-subjective. The former deals with the underlying colonial relationship

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between the state and civility based on the order/chaos binary. It is central to the notion of the monopoly of violence and the state's responsibility for social protection; it underpins the logic of what is acceptable/legitimate as authority; it constitutes the mirroring of notions of morality and secularity and the entrepreneurship of politics. Closely related and within the same spatial and temporal flow, the socio-cultural-subjective dimension consists of the cognitive basis and political implications of affirming certain rationality: the logic of dangerous otherness (which creates the need for a state that protects), with effects related to the politics of enmity and angry political polarization; the implementation of surveillance technologies in digitization processes and a certain willingness to curtail freedom; the aesthetic production of fear and images of violence with high media reproducibility.

The conceptual outline of the politics of fear allows reflection on the rise of the far right and popular adherence to authoritarianism from a comprehensive perspective. The approach is concerned with the emergence and persistence over time of the far right, oscillations either in its radicalism or adherence, and thus understanding its consequences as socio-political landmarks beyond surprising electoral victories around the world. Reflection on how public life and political experience produce and mobilize affects will serve as support for social adherence. Inspired by Kathya Araujo, I have previously identified fundamental socio-existential anchors that are key for understanding the appeal of far-right ideas in contemporary times.

> **Authoritarian socio-existential anchors**

The relationship between authority and perceptions of efficiency that is cemented in the collective imagination of territories with colonial state formations is fundamental for the assimilation of authoritarianism. There is a historical dynamic of criminalizing otherness reflected in the racialized structure of the state, the use of force and violence as territorial domination, and subjective markers of distinction between colonizer and colonized. When we look at Brazil, it is remarkable how its historical formation demonstrates the construction of this understanding of the effectiveness of authority based on the repression of enslaved rebellions. Recognizing that this widespread fear is foundational and sustains social relations allows us to think of variations in the ways authority (authoritarianism) is exercised, even under the guise of democracy. The compatibility of authoritarianism with neoliberalism demonstrates, moreover, the pervasive expansion of authoritarian practices, manifested in multiple spheres of life, from the most intimate and individual to broader social relations.

The role of fear in the process of constituting images of self and others, as well as in the dynamics of territoriality in the emergence of urban spaces, justifies the idea that fear is a colonizing affect that updates divisions in

the city, as originally formulated by Vladimir Safatle. Territories offer a prism through which social arrangements can be identified. There are forceful implications in both directions between fear and spatiality, which include architecture, urban planning, and the representation (and location) of subaltern groups as "bearers" of threat and violence. Some of the consequences of this spatiality can be seen in walled cities, in gated communities, or in militarized urban planning. The existence of the metropolis is not visible in itself: it requires the colony for the contrast between the invisible and the visible to be revealed, and it is from this perspective that the process of urbanization is understood as geographies of fear and the criminalization of dangerous otherness based on racism.

Urban sociology in countries on the world's periphery suggests that there is an extrapolation of the feeling of insecurity through media and daily conversations among people, as well as the actual presence of crime. Following the aesthetics of militarized urban planning, fences and walls are intensified, organizing the city not only for reasons of security and segregation but also for those of aesthetics and status. This leads us to reflect on the importance of maintaining and deepening social inequalities and mediatized urban violence for the consolidation of social chasms.

Another crucial anchorage that justifies the Manichean foundation of good (us) and evil (them) concerns relationships of morality, religiosity, and rationality. The result of these fusions – involving religion, the state, and rationality – refers not only to the character of norms and institutions; they are elements that trigger collective interpellations and the production of shared sensitivities. At this historical moment, when we are already quite familiar with a positive connotation of "civilization" and "domestication," we can say that women and colonized and enslaved populations continue to be more immediate targets (the 'deviants') of patriarchy. It is no wonder that the reactivity of the far right is characterized as masculinized, white, claiming heteronormative virility and militarized violence, encompassing its repulsion of what they call "gender ideology." It is true that the displacement of women from the restriction of domestic space to occupying public spaces has stirred an existential fear within masculinity.

> **Authoritarian imagination and societal tendencies**

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting three contemporary societal tendencies that constitute socio-existential anchors accommodating the rise of the authoritarian imagination: individualization, digitization, and a sense of urgency. The first deals with the modern subject tutored by the terror of the stranger. Encounters with the other destabilize the order of self. The individual lives in a world that is disturbing and so continually seeks artifices as a protection from the other who

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is seen as an intruder, an announced danger. In this sense, social bonds are governed by fear – economically structured – where the authority of the state guarantees that life in society is not a threatening vulnerability. The mark of individualization, in its radicalized expression, can be exemplified through "entrepreneurship of the self."

The second tendency, digitization, deals with the power of image penetration, which is increasing in a reality where the acceleration of time is a fundamental characteristic. Digitization sustains – and is sustained by – a high flow of information, technological advancements with implications for communication and relations, scattered attention in the short-term accommodating multiple possibilities, and thus the instantaneous power of the image. The image has "symbolic efficacy," meaning that it already carries content and immediately produces meaning in relation to the signifiers that make up the imaginary unity of the self. The centrality of the image, intertwined with the digitization of society, has significant effects on language itself and the circulation of ideas. The concatenation of images that produce an authoritarian, racist, masculine repertoire is integrated, through various means, into the imaginary that the far-right claims and amplifies.

Finally, in contemporary capitalism, we live in the paradox of technological development with a proportional acceleration of time which leads to a continuous state of urgency due to a lack of time. What seemed to point to an exuberant economy of time, given the increased speed of transportation, communication, and especially production, has turned into its exhaustion. The acceleration of modernity implies a social desynchronization, where individuals always perceive themselves as being late and are afraid of missing out on opportunities. This sense of delay promotes two strategies that seem central to the far right. The first is the notion that everything is an "ultimatum": "we must act, and we must act now," there is no time for the elaboration of a future project. The second indicates the obsolescence of institutions and their apparatus which prove slow in the face of the rapidity of flowing needs. These dimensions arise from the dynamic of time acceleration reflected by Helmut Rosa, which impacts collective and individual understanding of space-time. If operating in a sense of urgency is imposed despite individual desires, through social structures, then we can say that there are means of agency in this.

> Final notes

Fear has produced and shaped subjectivities throughout history by influencing discursive matrices (languages) in an insomniac and mobile relationship with sensitivity and corporeality. Structural and structuring elements of fear are present in history, constantly reinventing themselves and reorganizing interpersonal relations. Devices and anchors of the policy of fear are mobilized as justification for authoritarian practices, whether in interpersonal relationships, groups, or between society and the state. The dispersion and multidimensionality of fear are striking, revealing a social aspect that is difficult to isolate; there are visible and invisible layers, which are related to fear in a mutually sustaining movement. The deepening of the multiplicity of fear devices as a political affect has led to the realization that they are agency and instrumentalization for strategies of domination and social control, which influence forms of interaction and subjective constitutions. ■

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> Water Struggles
as Resistance to Neoliberal Capitalism

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Warragamba Dam. Credit: iStock, zetter, 2022.

Growing up in Australia during the Millennium Drought, water – or the lack of it – was omnipresent. Now that I have lived in northern Europe for most of the last decade, the growing urgency of discussions on diminishing groundwater, drought, and stagnant rivers feels worryingly familiar. For much of the minority world, water has tended to be something that we take for granted. It is when water is absent, when it stops flowing, or when what flows is so polluted that it is unsafe that we start to take notice of the myriad ways in which we are dependent upon water and the ways that it lubricates the global political economy. Water, its presence or absence, determines not only how and where we can live, but also who will survive, which is simply to say that we cannot do without it.

> ### The common good must be central
>   to any solution

Such an alienated relation to water is far from universal; many Indigenous communities understand water as life, as part of us, and thus as something that cannot be commodified. For the over 2 billion people who live without access to clean drinking water, and 25% of the world's population who live in water-stressed environments, water is clearly not something that is taken for granted. Water activists around the world have united under the common call "water is life" demanding that water be understood as a common good that is central to any successful response to the ongoing ecological crisis.

Despite facing a global water crisis, water and its related services and infrastructures continue to be commodified, privatised, commercialised, and increasingly financialised. These processes are presented as solutions rather than causes of the crisis. For example, the outcomes of the recent UN Water Conference – the first UN conference dedicated to water in over 50 years – comprised calls to further mobilise the private sector to fill the financing gap. And while transnational corporations, water companies, and finance institutions were encouraged to make voluntary pledges and included in discussions on how water management could be further integrated with green (now perhaps also blue?) finance and corporate social responsibility, many water activists and NGOs were not invited.

> ### Life-making versus profit-making:
>   resistance to commodification

In my recently published book *Water Struggles as Resistance to Neoliberal Capitalism: A Time of Reproductive Unrest*, I explore the global water crisis and the ways that communities in Australia and the Republic of Ireland have resisted the expansion of the water commodity frontier. I employ an incorporated comparison where struggles over water are used as a vehicle through which to give coherence to this specific conjuncture; a conjuncture marked by concurrent economic, ecological, and social reproductive crises, of which the global water crisis is one facet.

The book has two central foci. First is the critical role of expropriation (of water, nature, and social reproduction) for capitalist accumulation. The second is the forms of agency that emerge in response to these dynamics. In bringing into dialogue the protests against water charges in Ireland and resistance to unconventional gas expansion in Australia, I explore the tension between life-making and profit-making that defines the new water commodity frontier.

My argument is that each water grab reflects a different, if inter-related, facet of a system that continues to undermine the capacity for life-making. In both cases, water resources or water as social reproduction infrastructure were reimagined as sites of accumulation to resolve existing accumulation crises that had emerged following the 2008-2010 financial crises. In Australia, nature was employed as 'tap and sink' where economic growth was dependent

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on its continuing expropriation in the forms of fossil fuels, mining, and agriculture. Meanwhile, in Ireland, public water services were targeted for restructuring to re-balance public budgets following the bank bailout, and working-class communities suffered the consequences.

> The 'spherical fix' as ineffective crisis management

However, a key argument of the book is that by acting in this way, the potential economic crises were not resolved. Rather, the expropriation and reimagining were shifted to the conditions that make accumulation possible: social reproduction, nature, and increasingly the state. Taking up David Harvey's conception of a *spatial fix* and reading it through social reproduction theory, I develop the notion of a *spherical fix* to show how crises are moved between these spheres as a form of crisis management. In Ireland, economic crisis was "resolved" by transforming it into a crisis of social reproduction for working-class communities. In Australia, potential economic crisis was staved off by fuelling the ecological crisis through intensified extraction of fossil fuels for export, and then subsequently depleting the social reproductive capacity of rural communities that were dependent upon those same waterscapes. This idea of a spherical fix thus also highlights the dependency of these accumulation regimes on the expropriation of nature and socially reproductive labour, that is, key dynamics of the global water crisis.

Yet in each case, by prioritising the reproduction of transnational capital over rural and working-class communities, the political institutions necessary for capital accumulation were destabilised. An overt overlap of political and economic interests saw both a closing down of formal political opportunities for alternatives and growing dissent amongst those rendered disposable in the existing status quo. Economic crises were now also taking the form of political crisis. In the process of struggle, subversive rationalities emerged that were incoherent with what had happened before; the political terrain was reconfigured as communities were newly politicised through struggle.

> Two examples of growing social struggle and class antagonism

In Australia, by redefining water as collective rather than a form of private property, rural communities were combating an alienated understanding of society and nature that was central to Australia's colonial expansion of the White commodity frontier. Understanding water and communities as co-constitutive made it necessary to separate questions of land ownership from private property, raising questions of dispossession and problematising *terra nullius*. In these social movements an incoherence with the dominant logics of the state and market emerged, as did a class antagonism along ecological lines. Water came to be understood as a constellation of contested social relations; and people's class position was determined by their relation to these processes of expropriation, rather than as a stratified position in society.

In Ireland, the focus on water as social reproduction infrastructure evolved quickly into a broader critique of the state and related institutions, particularly representational democracy. Water as social reproduction and related infrastructure was understood as common, a collective right, which should not be a target for capital accumulation. However, through making these claims, the limited capacity and interest of the state to account for this collective right came into sharper focus: the material limitations of the state meant that even if rights such as the right to water were expanded on paper, they could not be realised. The Irish state and its embeddedness in circuits of global finance capital meant that it would continue to be an antagonist to the realisation of working-class interests.

> Space for subversive rationalities: reproductive unrest

In the process of each social struggle more than temporary alliances emerged; a common relation to expropriation allowed solidarity across and within communities. Both the Irish and Australian communities exemplified a key contradiction of neoliberal capitalism: the increasing incompatibility of the conditions necessary for profit-making and life-making. In analysing these struggles through a dialogue with eco-socialist and social reproduction theory the arena for class struggle was broadened to include the home, nature, and neighbourhood.

Locating these struggles within the global water crisis and starting at the points of contradiction, I argue that struggles over water both interrupt processes of capitalist reproduction and open a space for subversive rationalities. In Australia and Ireland, what has emerged is a time of reproductive unrest. As I show throughout the book, the global water crisis is not only about access to or management of a resource. What is at stake are the social relations and institutions that allow water grabs and the crises to occur. ∎

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GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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