EPISTEMOLOGIES AT A CROSSROADS

Decolonising Knowledges on Politics of Development, Economics, and Feminism

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Gisela Carrasco i Miró

Text: Gisela Carrasco i Miró

Image (front): *Homo Rodans* (1959) by Remedios Varo.

Sculpture based on chicken bones, turkey and fish bones 41 x 17 x 6.5 cm

"Creo muy urgente dejar bien establecido que la palabra 'evolución' con su contenido de ideas erróneas sobre la posible mudanza de las cosas en forma mecánicamente desprovista de voluntad trascendental, es el origen de la ignorancia y confusión reinantes"

Remedios Varo. *Homo Rodans* (1959)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A love letter:

People say that writing a book is a long journey, a journey that often begins long before it is dreamed. They also say that, like other journeys, a book never happens alone. While the responsibility for what is written is not shared, the path leading to its being written is shared. Perhaps this has been the main and most important lesson I learned throughout the PhD: sharing life while we are learning. Yet, it is definitely not only in academic circles you can do that, rather it is in every moment of our lives, we may be ready to learn to live together and learn together to live. Friendship, in all its forms, is this deep complicity in sharing life, while we learn to live. I would like to do a return gesture in the form of acknowledgements to the friendships that have accompanied me in this journey. As all return gestures, they ultimately express love.

Looking back, I would say everything started in my grandmother's, *la meva àvia* Antònia, house. A place, in front of my parent's house, where, thanks to my grandmother, I learned that reality is not reduced to what exists and that most of what does not exist could and deserves to exist. I have followed passionately this learning over the years. During my student years in the faculty of Economics in Barcelona, I

grew an interest and commitment to social change. This is something I discovered with Víctor, with whom I learned and took pleasure in learning about the worlds, I am happy to say, still I do. At that time and during some years, we sang the song "*Algo se muere en el alma cuando un amigo se va*" by Los Del Río. I used to think that part of the song was funny. Now, I know it is also true. Indeed, something, however small, dies within you when a friend leaves.

After my studies in Barcelona, intuition and adventure took me to London to study a Master's degree in Development Economics at SOAS. Before leaving my parents' house to go to London, my father asked me why I choose to study development economics, and above all, what development is about. I was puzzled by both questions, yet they have followed me until the very last lines of this dissertation. My studies in London were intense, as I discovered two new worlds for me: development studies and Sub-Saharan Africa. I was not alone in this, either. I am eternally grateful to all the people I met in SOAS, they imbued in me an interest in research and encourage me to be uncomfortable with doctrines and look for the many other possible worlds that challenge dogmas. A grant from the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation gave me the opportunity to work with the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Guatemala. I am infinitely thankful for having had the unique opportunity to *senti-pensar*, to live, to know, to fall in love in what is still for me the most

beautiful place I have ever seen, Guatemala. In Guatemala, I was fortunate to work, live, meet and celebrate life with feminist and Indigenous friends, teachers, movements, leaders and groups. Meeting them changed my life forever. I express my especial gratitude to Bego, with whom I shared house in *El Zapote* and still share dreams, chats, and once in a while, beers and chips. My warmest thanks goes to *mi maestra* Marcela, Izaskun, the Feminist and Gender Studies postgraduate colleagues and the CSEM partners and friends. I am immensely grateful to all of them for those years of feminist learnings, feminist self-consciousness, teachings, gatherings and care. In Guate I also met Bryan – with him I would emigrate to Mozambique years later. Without him, without his love, his care, his friendship and everything we shared, I would never have reached this point.

Mozambique and all the RIVelioners are home. Family. A chosen one and forever and ever. And this is true love. I thank to each and every one of the RIVelioners Una, Hannah, Amelie, Nely, Dhaliso, Sergio, Antoine, Ritshall, Maria, Bryan, Orlanda and Caroline to each and every *varanda* we shared, invented and celebrated. I believe that the idea of doing a PhD became for the first time a real possibility in my imaginary in one of those many nights we shared. We were dreaming together and I guess Dhaliso – who else could be! – saw it clearly: "I picture you writing, just writing, having time to write. Discussing this that you hold inside. Having time for you. I see a desk. I see you looking

through the window and writing. Since you are inside a house, this place must be, probably, a cold place… I guess is somewhere in the North of Europe." I thank Dhaliso for her trust, vision and revelation. She saw it through before I could even believe I could do a PhD. I also deeply thank Ramon for sharing with me what was my first B-52 in *Coconuts* in Maputo, the inauguration of a great friendship. I do not forget his genuine and important support in what, at that time, was a very difficult decision for me, to leave the United Nations and pursue a PhD. My years in Mozambique would have not be the same without Una and Hannah. Neither the years after. I am eternally grateful to them and the goddesses for our beautiful and true friendship. Their sisterhood and wisdom at so many levels have given me strength and love during all the process of this research. May we always be together.

I decided to do my PhD in the Netherlands at Utrecht University. I am very thankful to my supervisors Rosemarie Buikema and Christine Quinan and the office manager Trude Oorschot for their trust in me since the very beginning. Here my indebtedness is twofold: for their guidance as well as for thinking of me on so many other occasions. I also need to thank Berteke, Gianmaria, Layal, Jamila, Eva and Christine for giving me the opportunity to be part of their courses as a guest lecturer. Sharing and discussing my research with the students was stimulating and enriching and helped me to improve the Articles in this dissertation. They have my deep gratitude for that. My thanks also go

This journey would have been unimaginable without all of you.

With love,

Gisela

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Postcolonial theory offers profound critiques of cultural hegemony and domination. Yet, postcolonial approaches have been criticized for marginalizing economic dimensions in their analysis, as witnessed from their relative lack of engagement with issues such as poverty, wealth creation and land. In turn, postcoloniality or engagement with the ideas and challenges posed by postcolonial critiques is virtually absent in existing economic literature. Possible alternatives to the gap between postcolonial theory and economics are, in epistemological terms, the missing links, the incomplete records, voids and ruptures in economic thinking and practice. This dissertation, composed of an extensive introduction followed by five peer-reviewed Articles and an afterword, takes as its point of departure the idea that these opportunities have not been sufficiently explored and it aims to contribute to the nascent approach of postcolonial feminist economics in doing so. Drawing on a transdisciplinary approach, I situate this dissertation within the ongoing decolonising project as a political, anti-colonial, and affirmative practice, aligned with projects and theoretical approaches that challenge and contest hegemonic modernist ways of knowing, being, and seeing the world.

This research, thereby, responds to the call made by postcolonial feminist economists to foreground the relevance of non-modernist understandings of the economy, feminism and non-Western moral orders from non-Western knowledges. The exploration of such possibilities takes two paths in this dissertation. Firstly, I submit the notion of development, which I read as a companion to colonialism, to an exacting critique, which allows me to highlight the cultural rootedness of development and its contemporary colonial forms as well as draw attention to existing alternatives to capitalism and counter-discourses from the Global South. I show how the dominant development epistemology has resulted in the loss of a vast set of social and economic knowledges. Building upon this argument, I explore non-Western economic, ethical and social dimensions of the epistemological claims and possibilities for thinking differently from capitalism in a non-ethnocentric, non-relativist way. Secondly, I investigate how the decolonising project and feminism inform, enhance, contradict and mutually influence one another in light of twenty-first-century entanglements of the increasing influence of global capital, transnational corporations, looming environmental crises and xenophobia. Decolonising feminism has been, and continues to be, a central challenge in feminist theory and politics. To complement ongoing feminist debates about decolonising solidarity in the age of

global neoliberalism, I argue that solidarity may be directed towards decolonization as a strategy. This means constructing the conditions for a different kind of encounter that both opposes ongoing colonisation, and seeks to heal the social, cultural, and spiritual ravages of colonial history. I propose, thereby, it is from the sustainability of life that solidarities in relationship with decolonization may be organised. This dissertation demonstrates that decolonising knowledge is more needed than ever in our current times and calls for a more profound rethinking of the place of culture and of currently devalued economies in both economic and feminist development theory.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Postkoloniale theorie levert een grondige kritiek op culturele hegemonie en dominantie. Echter, postkoloniale benaderingen zijn vaak bekritiseerd vanwege het de marginale rol die economische dimensies spelen in hun analyse, zoals blijkt uit het relatieve gebrek aan aandacht voor thema's zoals armoede, het scheppen van welvaart, en land. Omgekeerd is er binnen de bestaande economische literatuur een gebrek aan aandacht voor postkolonialiteit en postkoloniale ideeën. Mogelijke alternatieven voor deze kloof tussen postkoloniale theorie en economie zijn, in epistemologische termen, de ontbrekende verbindingen, de incomplete vermeldingen, de leegtes en scheuren in het economisch denken en praktijk. Dit proefschrift, dat bestaat uit een uitgebreide introductie gevolgd door vijf peer-reviewed artikelen en een nawoord, neemt als uitgangspunt het idee dat deze kansen onvoldoende verkend zijn, en heeft als doel om bij te dragen aan de ontluikende benadering van postkoloniale feministische economie. Gebruikmakend van een transdisciplinaire benadering, situeer ik dit proefschrift binnen het voortdurende project van dekolonisatie als een politieke, anti-koloniale en affirmatieve praktijk die in lijn is met projecten en theoretische benaderingswijzen die hegemonische en modernistische

manieren om de wereld te kennen, zijn en zien, bekritiseren en uitdagen.

Zo beantwoordt dit onderzoek de oproep van postkoloniale feministische economen om aandacht te geven aan de relevantie van non-modernistische benaderingen van de economie, het feminisme, en niet-Westerse morele ordes, vanuit een niet-Westers perspectief. Het verkennen van zulke mogelijkheden neemt in dit proefschrift twee vormen aan. Ten eerste wordt de notie van 'ontwikkeling', die ik begrijp als een metgezel van het kolonialisme, aan een strenge kritiek onderworpen. Dit stelt me in staat om de culturele geworteldheid van ontwikkeling en haar hedendaagse koloniale vormen te benadrukken, en aandacht te vestigen op de bestaande alternatieven voor het kapitalisme en counter-discoursen vanuit het globale Zuiden. Ik laat zien hoe de dominante epistemologie van ontwikkeling geresulteerd heeft in het verlies van een grote reeks aan sociale en economische vormen van kennis. Bouwend op dit argument, verken ik niet-Westerse economische, ethische en sociale dimensies van de epistemologische claims en mogelijkheden om anders dan kapitalistisch te denken op een niet-etnocentrische en niet-relativistische wijze. Ten tweede onderzoek ik hoe het project van dekolonisatie en feminisme zowel met elkaar in samenspraak en tegenspraak zijn, tegen de achtergrond van de eenentwintigste-eeuwse verwikkelingen, waaronder de groeiende

invloed van globaal kapitaal, transnationale corporaties, dreigende milieucrises en xenofobie. Dekoloniserend feminisme is en blijft een centrale uitdaging voor feministische theorie en politiek. Om voortdurende feministische debatten over dekoloniserende solidariteit in de context van globaal neoliberalisme aan te vullen, beargumenteer ik dat solidariteit gericht kan zijn op dekolonisatie als strategie. Dit betekent dat de condities voor een ander soort ontmoeting geconstrueerd moeten worden. Een ontmoeting die zich verzet tegen de voortdurende kolonisatie, maar ook de sociale, culturele en spirituele ravages van de koloniale geschiedenis probeert te helen. Ik stel dat solidariteiten in relatie tot dekolonisatie georganiseerd kunnen worden vanuit de duurzaamheid van het leven. Dit proefschrift toont aan dat het dekoloniseren van kennis vandaag meer dan ooit nodig is, en doet een oproep voor een grondigere heroverweging van de plaats van cultuur en gedevalueerde economieën in zowel economische en feministische ontwikkelingstheorie.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Silencing acts, when conducted as epistemicides, represent the death of the knowledge of the subordinate culture (Anzaldúa 1987; Santos 2014) and the eradication of such knowledge is not an epistemological artefact without consequences—it contains the disqualification of the social groups and the destruction of the social practices that operate according to such knowledges. The intensity of these silencings has been particularly broad and deep within the field of economics, most notably in its grounding concept of development, imposing an especially singular view (i.e. capitalism and modernism; Escobar 2016; Santos 2014; Spivak 2016; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004). Although postcolonial theory offers a profound critique of cultural hegemony and colonialism, "theorizing the economy continues to be a point of weakness in much postcolonial scholarship" (Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004, 4; see also Pollard, McEwan and Hughes 2011). Likewise, "there is hardly any mention of postcoloniality—as a concept or contemporary condition rather than a purely historical marker" in economic literature to date

(Zein-Elabdin 2011a, 48). Possible alternatives able to address this gap between postcolonial thought and economics are, in epistemological terms, the incomplete records, the missing links, voids, ruptures in economic thinking and practice. This dissertation starts from the idea that these productive ruptures have not been sufficiently explored (Gibson-Graham 2006; Kapoor 2008; Pollard, McEwan and Hughes 2011; Spivak 2016; Zein-Elabdin 2011a, 2016; Zein-Elabdin and Chrusheela 2004) and aims to contribute to the nascent approach of postcolonial feminist economics by doing so. This research, therefore, responds to the call made by postcolonial feminist economists Eiman O. Zein-Elabdin and S. Charuseheela (2004) "to look anew at the meanings of development, progress, empowerment" (180) by foregrounding the relevance of non-modernist approaches and understandings of politics, the economy, feminism, and the non-Western moral imperatives that spring from non-Western knowledges, societies, and groups.

The exploration of these possibilities takes two distinct paths in this dissertation. Firstly, I submit what I perceive as a companion to colonialism—the dominant contemporary discourses and practices, and their various sites of economic policy and practice (hereinafter, referred to as development)—to an exacting critique.

I use five Articles as the foundation for my critique: In Article 1, entitled "A Critical Look at the Gender Responsive Budgeting Approach in the Development Discourse: A Feminist Contribution to Postcolonial Politics of Development" and published in the *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies/Dutch Journal of Gender Studies*, I examine the cultural rootedness of development and draw attention to existing alternatives to capitalism and the counter-discourses of the Global South. Drawing on feminist, Indigenous, decolonial art and critical environmentalist knowledges, in Article 2, entitled "EcoSImies of Care: A Proposal for Decolonising 'Sustainable Development,'" published in *Insurgencies from the South and Human Rights: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, I show how the dominant development epistemology (i.e. capitalism and Western modernity) has resulted in the loss of a vast set of social and economic experiences and, particularly, in the extensive destruction of ways of economic knowing that do not fit the current hegemonic development epistemological canon. Concurrently, in Article 3—"Decolonising Feminist Development Economics: Expanding the Economic Canon and Searching for Alternate Frameworks," accepted for publication by the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*—I explore non-Western economic, ethical, and social dimensions of the epistemological claims being made and the possibilities for thinking differently from capitalism in a non-ethnocentric, non-

relativist way. Of course, these claims have existed for many years, and many even predate the colonial conquests. In recent times, however, and as a result of the alternative politics and resistance of the Global South, the prevalence of the epistemicide brought about by development has been more efficiently exposed (e.g. Espinosa, Gómez and Ochoa 2014). Thus, the silences produced have become much more apparent, and the new possibilities they open have grown ever more promising and credible.

Secondly, decolonising feminism has been, and continues to be, a central challenge in feminist theory, particularly in the light of neoliberal globalisation (Lugones 2010; Mohanty 2017). In this regard, Article 4—"Encountering the Colonial: The Religion in Feminism and the Coloniality of Secularism," submitted to the journal *Feminist Theory*—takes up this feminist concern and investigates how the decolonising project and feminism inform, enhance, contradict, and mutually influence one another in the light of xenophobia. In this way, Article 4 widens the decolonising approach suggested in Article 3, while both Articles identify the main traits of the project of decolonising via a feminist approach that crosses epistemological and disciplinary borders, and provide conceptual tools with which to decolonise

hegemonic feminism—specifically its approach to economics in non-Western contexts and "religion" in Western Europe.[1] A decolonising approach here becomes a task and a process of liberation from assumed modernist principles of knowledge, and understandings of the politics of development, economics, and feminism. This entails not only exposing the cultural rootedness of Western knowledge, but also creating possibilities for re-existence, resistance, and the validation of previously silenced knowledges and solidarities. Additionally, to complement the ongoing feminist debates that surround decolonising solidarity in the age of neoliberalism (see Mohanty 2017), in Article 5—entitled "South-South Cooperation and Trilateral Development Cooperation: New Donors, Same Colonial Practices? Towards Decolonising Solidarity," accepted for publication by the *International Affairs Journal*—I propose possible decolonising parameters via which to articulate solidarity from the perspective of the sustainability of life. In the light of the twenty-first-century entanglements of the increasing influence of global capital, transnational corporations, and the looming environmental crisis, I argue that solidarity should be directed towards decolonisation. This entails the construction of the conditions needed "for a different kind of encounter"—"one that both opposes ongoing

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[1] I choose to expressly use quotation marks when referring to religion in this text, bringing into question the Western- and Christian-centric view attached to the term. See also Adlbi (2016) and Article 4 in this dissertation.

colonisation and seeks to heal the social, cultural, and spiritual ravages of colonial history" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42). I propose, thereby, it is from the sustainability of life that solidarities in relationship with decolonisation must be organised. Taken together, the five Articles in this dissertation demonstrate that decolonising knowledge is currently needed more than ever.

In framing this dissertation, this introduction offers a critical reflection on decolonising knowledge and brings to light some of the main interpretive possibilities concerning the colonial epistemic geopolitics that are dealt with throughout the Articles. Additionally, this introduction presents the research questions, feminist research methods, and practices used in this dissertation, as well as the conceptual tools and decolonial proposals elaborated throughout the Articles. This introduction is structured as follows: In the proceeding section, I discuss decolonising knowledge through the analysis of the poem "*Kinch'awik*" by the Maya Kíché poet Humberto Ak'abal in order to grasp the "why" that subtends projects of epistemic decolonisation. I suggest here, in a complimentary move, the concept of trust in order to expand the scope of our critical horizon in projects of decolonisation beyond the limits of existing critique. In Section II, I outline the two central research questions of this dissertation as well as a

number of related sub-questions—all concerned with the decolonisation of knowledge and key issues within development and feminist discourse in a contemporary global context. In Section III, I present the four specific research methods and practices I have engaged with in this dissertation. In Section IV, I highlight the conceptual and analytical tools and decolonial open proposals elaborated via the Articles. Finally, in Section V, I provide a structural outline of the dissertation.

I.   DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE

More than ever, global capitalism and its market fundamentalism appears as a civilisational paradigm (Pérez Orozco 2014), encompassing all domains of social life and activity, for example at the local, national, and international levels—including interpersonal relationships between people, within their immediate surroundings, across the public sector, and within politics, economics, and civil society.[2] The exclusions,

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[2] For readers unfamiliar with the term, market fundamentalism is the strong belief in the ability of free market policies to solve most economic, social, and ecological problems.

oppressions, and discriminations it produces have not only economic, social, ecological, and political dimensions (Gibson-Graham 2006; Harvey 2005), but also encompass cultural and epistemological dimensions (Escobar 1995; Kapoor 2008; Santos 2014). In this regard, the economic crisis, failures in development, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation can no longer be regarded as mere side effects or economic "externalities"—as they are often referred to by dominant "global organisations of knowledge" such as the World Bank (see WB 2018).[3] They include the consequences of pretensions that the Western modernity paradigm of knowledge (i.e. capitalist, rational, liberal, secular, patriarchal, white, and nation-state based) is a superior and universal view, applicable to all people, all communities, all beings, at all times. Concurrently, in this modernist paradigm, the knowledge, peoples, and cultures of traditions that differ from the Western modern "ideal" are treated as nonexistent, irrelevant, underdeveloped, and incomprehensible (e.g. Espinosa, Gómez and Ochoa 2014; Said 1978; Thiong'o 1986). Postcolonial and decolonial scholars refer to this ethnocentric universalism as the "colonisation of knowledge" (Anzaldúa 1987; Césaire [1972] 1950; Fanon 1963;

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[3] The World Bank has now rebranded itself as the world's "Global Knowledge Bank" (see Cornwall 2010).

Quijano 2000; Rivera Cusicanqui 1987; Simpson 2001; Smith 1999; Tuck and Yang 2012).

There have been significant attempts to decolonise knowledge, and such processes have been named and featured in such a way as to bring to the fore the real and politically important unequal power relations that exist between colonised and colonising political, social, and epistemic systems. There have been a variety of approaches to the discursive and political project of decolonising knowledge, as well as an (exponential) increase in the number of investigations into the decolonisation of disciplines, thinking, methodologies, and the mind. Theorists such as (among others) Boulbina and Cohen (2012), Dhanda and Parashar (2009), Espinosa, Gómez and Ochoa (2014), Gordon (2007), and Quijano (2000) speak explicitly about decolonising knowledge. Similarly, various individuals and groups engaged in political processes of decolonisation orient their actions in accordance with assumptions about what counts as knowledge, and how one should understand the relation of knowledge to broader decolonial concerns such as transnational feminism, gender relations, race, or settler colonialism (e.g. Curiel 2007; Lugones 2008, 2010; Mohanty 2017; Rivera Cusicanqui 1984; Spivak 1999; Tuck and Yang 2012). Yet, the meaning of

epistemic decolonisation is not only far from self-evident, but also contains an enormous number of possible interpretations. In this sense, the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe (2015) framed the problem perfectly when addressing the issue of decolonising knowledge in a speech in Johannesburg:

[T]he questions we face are of a profoundly intellectual nature. They are also colossal. And if we do not foreground them intellectually in the first instance; if we do not develop a complex understanding of the nature of what we are actually facing, we will end up with the same old technobureaucratic fixes that have led us, in the first place, to the current cul-de-sac… The harder I tried to make sense of "decolonisation" that has become the rallying cry for those trying to undo the racist legacies of the past, the more I kept asking myself to what extent we might be fighting a complexly mutating entity with concepts inherited from an entirely different age and epoch. Is today's university the same as yesterday's or are we confronting an entirely different apparatus, an entirely different rationality—both of which require us to produce radically new concepts? (8)

In addition to the conceptual ambiguities that arise in the bridging of the notions of "knowledge" and "decolonisation," the term "knowledge" itself proves to be quite invidious and contentious (Foucault 1980; Spivak 1999), while the term "decolonisation" is typically considered desirable—albeit in an undefined and unqualified way. Regarding the latter, however, Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and scholar K. Wayne Yang (2012) alert us to the ease with which the language of decolonisation has been superficially adopted, especially in academic circles, arguing that "[t]he metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or 'settler moves to innocence,' that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (1). Thus, the conjunction of both concepts—knowledge and decolonisation—only multiplies and intensifies the affective, political, and theoretical issues that tend to underlie these concepts when treated separately. In other words, the conceptual problems intimated by Mbembe (2015) are always bound up with a variety of competing affects, powers, and desires between groups, individuals, and institutions, and concern the present and the future. This doubly complicates the question of how to adequately approach the topic at hand.

In most cases, projects of epistemic decolonisation begin by exercising a hermeneutics of suspicion (Santos 2014) in which some forms of, or claims to, knowledge and its "foundational truths" are variously understood to be directly connected to processes of colonisation. In this regard, and in order to frame this dissertation, it may be useful to understand why such suspicions and intuitions arise in the first place in order to uncover what lies beneath their "face value." Rather than privileging one method, option, or theory of epistemic decolonisation as exemplary, in this introduction I begin by exploring some of the main interpretive possibilities that are open to those interested in decolonising knowledge. In order to do so, I first turn to an analysis of the poem "*Kinch'awik*" by the Maya Kíché poet Humberto Ak'abal ([1996] 1998). While the poem might be read as addressing colonial epistemic geopolitics, in common with all poems, it has more than one definitive interpretation. Reading and analysing "*Kinch'awik*" foregrounds some of the many motivational and conceptual issues dealt with in this dissertation and that give rise to various attempts to decolonise knowledge. The poem offers a vividly depicted scene concerning the use of knowledge in the context of (any) colonial confrontation, and in doing so, opens an introductory, decolonising space for experimentation and subversion. In this sense, reading "*Kinch'awik*" may allow us to grasp the "why" that subtends projects of epistemic decolonisation.

Kinch'awik[4]

Hablo	Kinch'awik	I speak
para taparle	che utz'apixik	to cover
la boca	ri uchi'	the mouth
al silencio.	ri tz'inowik.	of silence.

By assertively claiming a valid place from which to disclose silenced worldviews and imagining spaces of potential action, Ak'abal's poem becomes a regenerative exercise in the face of the destruction, fear, and violence that the Mayan people have, and continue to, suffer. The poignant sentiment of the poem brings to the fore numerous issues pertinent to an anti-colonial politics of knowledge. Its depth and power—to capture a complex thought in a short and concise phrase—is largely derived from its ability to speak to issues that arise in a variety of contemporary contexts.

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[4] Translated into English by Caso (2010).

With a shared legacy of epistemicide, fear, and imposed silences worldwide, there is much at stake in voicing certain worldviews about a painful and traumatic past, event, or indeed, an overwhelming and complicated present. Taken at face value, this poem constitutes a creative exercise, a subversive act in cultural memory, and tragic irony from an anti-colonial standpoint. It allows one to remember the invasion, violence, and arrogance of Spanish colonisation over 500 years ago, which was not only physical, social, and economic, but also featured the imposition of a particular system of knowledge (i.e. Eurocentric modernity and Christianity; Escobar 1995). It also acknowledges the ongoing colonisation of knowledge, negating Indigenous knowledges and peoples after the colonial administrations, while demonstrating that Indigenous knowledge and peoples remain unsubjugated, sovereign, and ignored (see also Espinosa, Gómez and Ochoa 2014).[5] As in the poem, this fact demonstrates that resistance to colonisation has been maintained to the present day. Ak'abal tells us about the systemic suffering inflicted upon Indigenous peoples by colonialism, and silence accompanies the pathos of the will to resist it ("I speak"; see also Caso 2010). Writing and "telling" in the face of the silencing authority of modern knowledge and power interrupts, breaks, opens, and

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[5] In this dissertation, I use the generalised political collectivity "Indigenous."

challenges the universalist modern-centric ways in which the world can be imagined and, therefore, experienced. "*Kinch'awik*" is, therefore, a decolonising effort to re-centre Indigenous consciousness as well as cultural heritage and in doing so, to restore Indigenous well-being. Thus, the interrogation of the representational order—"I speak to cover the mouth of silence"—is the first impulse towards project(s) of decolonising knowledge. It allows for emancipatory energies of realities that seek to make a positive difference to the conditions or lives of people and other beings that are otherwise actively silenced and produced as nonexistent or inferior/underdeveloped, thus opening the possibility of a better, fairer future.

In my reading, "*Kinch'awik*" symbolises both the acknowledgement of the historical trauma of colonialism, and the triumph of Indigenous knowledge—establishing a new cognitive justice, as claimed by the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1993), by "moving the center" (1). The Indian scholar Shiv Visvanathan (2009) notes:

> The idea of cognitive justice . . . sensitizes us not only to forms of knowledge but [also] to the diverse communities

of problem solving. What one offers then is a democratic imagination with a non-market, non-competitive view of the world, where conversation, reciprocity, translation create knowledge not as an expert, almost zero-sum view of the world but as a collaboration of memories, legacies, heritages, a manifold heuristics of problem solving, where a citizen takes both power and knowledge into his [or her or their] own hands. (para. 37)

These forms of knowledge embody new forms of problem-solving and power sharing that surpass the limits of resistance and voice. They are emancipatory because they exceed the usual hegemonic schemes of innovation and power. By incorporating the dynamics of knowledge into a democratic imagination, the principles of knowledge are reframed and create a new reflexive conception of democracy that is centred around concrete communities of practice (Visvanathan 2009), allowing for the emergence of epistemological options that give credibility to the forms of knowledge that underline those practices. This is inseparable from the epistemological diversity that divides and organises the world in ways that differ from Western thinking. In this vein, the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) draws a close link between these values and aspirations, stating that "global social injustice is therefore intimately linked

to global cognitive injustice" (63). Thus, if critical thinking is to contribute to the struggle for global social justice, it must necessarily contribute to the struggle for cognitive justice as well.

Indigenous and other non-Western peoples across the world have other stories to tell that not only question the assumed neutrality of Western-centric narratives, but also serve to tell those alternative stories (Haraway 2016; Rivera Cusicanqui 1987, 2011; Smith 1999; Thiong'o 1986; Tuck and Yang 2012) that emerge from specific epistemologies or ways of knowing. By assertively claiming a valid place from which to expose previously silenced non-Western worldviews and perspectives, and to envision spaces of potential action (both political and personal), the project of decolonising knowledge becomes a creative exercise in the face of fear, violence, and destruction. In this sense, while suspicion—that is, to question whether what the text appears to say really does correspond to its "true" message— provides a necessary warning because, as the hermeneutics of suspicion rightly asserts, suspicion alone is not enough. I suggest here, in a complimentary move, the concept of trust in order to expand the scope of our critical horizon in projects of decolonisation beyond the contours of existing critique. This move generates the conditions needed so that we will be able to

trust each other. The most powerful political tool in these times of such violence, destruction, and uncertainty is the cultivation of trust (Garcés 2017). This is never general; the whole world is not trusted in some abstract manner. Rather, trust is, in fact, very concrete: it is about generating networks—not only the personal, most basic, horizontal, reciprocal, and intimate, but also the public, drawn from both private life and politics. This is the trust that allows us to relate to that which we do not know, to stop pushing aside, denying, or covering up what we do not know about ourselves and the world. In this regard, I find Thiong'o's (1986) use of the term "decolonising" in the context of the politics of language in African literature especially productive—by which he means the ongoing liberating process in which we might "see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe" (87). Citing Thiong'o, Mbembe (2015) calls upon us to "see ourselves clearly," and explains that for Thiong'o, doing so is not an act of separation from the rest of humanity, but is done *in relation to* ourselves and to other selves, including all living beings and objects with whom we share the universe (15, emphasis mine). This is about trust. That is, being able to address ourselves and to share our words while resisting any kind of coercion or control.

In this vein, "I speak to cover the mouth of silence" becomes, in my reading, a way of reclaiming agency through the process of trusting as well as naming the re-existence, resistance, and validation of silenced knowledges. Thus, "*Kinch'awik*" serves to illustrate the unfinished and the unresolved. It helps to interrupt, in a self-conscious manner, any effort by other forms of discourse to hide inconsistencies in favour of a homogenous relating of events. Anzaldúa (1987) has called this space of knowledge production the "colonial wound"—a never healing injury inflicted by the racist devaluation of non-Western forms of embodied knowledge—to capture, precisely, the spaces where new forms of conviviality and reflection are produced. In that sense, the ongoing process of decolonising allows for silenced knowledges and wounded subjects, peoples, societies and communities to reclaim a sense of dignity in the face of (imposed) impotence and indifference; to value their multifaceted subjectivities despite being forced into abject and marginal positions; and to reassert their humanity on their own terms.

In this context, the Articles included in this dissertation address decolonising knowledge, particularly in the domains of politics of development, economics, and feminism, and go one step further by exemplifying the promises, possibilities, and difficulties of

bringing together and staging non-relativist dialogues and solidarities between forms of knowledge, cultures, and cosmologies in response to different forms of silencing and oppression that enact epistemic colonisation and power.

II.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation focuses on two central research questions, with a number of related sub-questions, all concerned with the decolonisation of knowledge, and key development and feminist-related issues in a contemporary global context. The first research question of this dissertation is: What knowledges, forms, and feminist conversations are shaping current development policymaking and what is the role of feminist theory and practice in those processes? This involves looking at what is actually being done in the name of development from a feminist and decolonising approach and how the concept of development itself is being used in, and by, contemporary dominant development narratives. Moreover, it requires examining how and why feminist conversations in development—particularly in the context of feminist economic development—have gained such

relevance in development discourse during the last decade. The question here is whether (and how) marginalised groups can locate their voices and achieve transformative social change within current development policymaking. If transformation and social change are not being fulfilled within current developmental frameworks, then the next question is whether it is possible to imagine a world without contemporary development policymaking and if so, how this world might look. Many of the existing cultural, economic, and political experiences and decolonising initiatives of the Global South can be used to shed light on the further possibilities of, and alternatives to, mainstream development.

The second research question of this dissertation asks: Can non-Western knowledges and wisdoms have an ontological explanation of their own in feminist theory without being considered underdeveloped/developing or residual? How do we achieve this without falling into either relativism or ethnocentrism? These questions aim to disrupt conceptual comfort zones in feminist theoritisation. They address the problems of ethnocentrism and relativism by focusing on the feminist analyst/research's role—her activities, dilemmas, and decisions—as well as engaging in decolonial dialogues in

differing cultural contexts. To be considered then is whether the ethnocentrism-relativism divide can be overcome in feminist theoritisation when non-Western knowledges and wisdoms are acknowledged and if so, how and what conceptual and analytical tools may help feminist analysts/researchers to better negotiate this divide (see the proceeding section for the conceptual and analytical tools elaborated throughout the Articles).

From these two foundational research questions arise the following sub-questions approached in the five Articles in this dissertation:

Article 1: Why do international development organisations insist, especially now in the age of transnational capitalism, on listening to Third World women's previous silenced voices?

Article 2: Why it is suddenly necessary (again) to specify that development has to be sustainable? What exactly is to be sustained in sustainable development? Is development the only answer to thinking about sustainability and climate change?

Article 3: How to enter into dialogue with potentially incompatible social and cultural value systems? What do we do when females in different cultures, in asserting their right to emancipation, for example, do not attack a gender construction that we believe to be patriarchal, nor seek to replace it with notions such as autonomy, which we consider marks of empowerment?

Article 4: How do we square the need to take account of plurality in feminism with the pressing need to assess and be able to build feminist collaborative alliances?

Article 5: Can solidarity reinscribe colonial logics and obscure complicity and continued colonisation? If so, it is possible to articulate a set of parameters for engaging in solidary relations as a decolonising strategy?

III.   FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODS AND PRACTICES

My engagement with the research questions in this dissertation have led to the development of the following four specific research methods and practices:

a) Transdisciplinary and Counter-Disciplinary Methods

This dissertation follows a transdisciplinary method that, rather than drawing on material from different disciplines and studies that seek to maintain their philosophical core and methodological tools (the current interdisciplinary approach), reveals—as evidenced in Articles 1, 2, 3 and 5—the common pre-analytical premises of economics, forcing them to lose any perceived autonomy amongst them (Charusheela and Zein-Elabdin 2003). I try to show this limitation in Articles 1 and 3, arguing that much of feminist development economics has left the cultural premise of economic growth intact. Part of this problematic, I claim, is due to the perceived autonomy, prestige, and hierarchisation of a more "scientific" disciplinary knowledge—in this case, the discipline of economics over "other, non-scientific" disciplines and studies such as cultural, queer, gender, and feminist studies.

The scientific status of economics depends significantly on its methods of inquiry: its methodological individualism; its use of rational choice theory; and mathematical modelling. Although feminist economists contest the idea that explanations based on methodological individualism and rational choice theory are the best way to achieve scientific rigor and objectivity, "most are committed to the notion of scientific inquiry" (Barker 2006, 214; see also Harding 1995). In this sense, feminist economists are committed to transforming economics by including gender, race, ethnicity, and notions of nation as categories of analysis, while at the same time maintaining the status and scientific character of economics.[6] Thus, the hegemonic economic episteme—that is, a modernist metaphysical understanding and cognitive system that includes a Eurocentric modern culture's positioning of itself in relation to the world and other cultures—remains untouched. By inheriting the prestige and subject matter of economics, feminist economics thereby also reaffirm Western modernism and the paradoxes associated with the scientific ambitions of the discipline (Barker 2006), as well as its metaphysical assumptions (Zein-Elabdin 2011b, 2016). Yet, based on my experience in the field of feminist economics, this commitment is motivated not

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[6] See Zein-Elabdin (2003) for a critique about feminist economists' modernist approach in their inclusion of race and ethnicity as categories of analysis.

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only by self-interest—becoming established in the profession, publishing, attaining tenure, etc.—but also by a genuine desire to pursue knowledge that will materially support the lives of women, and especially, impoverished women.

Disciplinary specialisation and hierarchisation—consolidated in the nineteenth-century reorganisation of knowledge (Klein 1990) that accompanied Europe's charting of the globe as its colonised space—still maintain the current economy of knowledge, namely, the division of labour that serves distinct academic markets, and thereby consolidate the disciplinary power of development discourse and the authority of economics. In this regard, a decolonising revision, I propose, forces disciplines to lose their current autonomy and authority. Thus, decolonising feminist development economics, as articulated in Articles 1 and 3, cannot begin at the level of development theory or policy without dissolving into development economics. Rather, it must begin with a decolonising approach to the cultural and philosophical construction of the subject matter of economics itself, namely, its "non-economic core" (Zein-Elabdin 2004, 22)—that is, its culturally arbitrated role (i.e. Western modernity) as a determinant of economic life (see Articles 1 and 3).

Displacing development discourse, therefore, requires a counter-disciplinary lens. Tracing the genealogy of development in European thought, at least, from Lucretius's *Pedetemtim Progredientis* in the Roman era and its strong presence in the modernist formulations of progress, to post-war economic literature (see Escobar 1995), readily shows that the project of development has little to do with the actual lives of the "less developed." As I show in Articles 1, 2, 3 and 5, extending this insight to the present context, one may say that development, as an orientalist project, has more to do with validating a certain metaphysical preconception predominant in the modernist tradition—that of a purposed historical movement that culminates in Western European modernist industrial society (Zein-Elabdin 2011b, 2016). As such, far from being a subsidiary field of economic specialisation, development, as argued throughout this dissertation, is a grounding concept for economics' imagination of itself as a part of Western modernity. A counter-disciplinary method, therefore, may be thought of here as a "systematic attempt to unmask the common metaphysical priors of individual academic disciplines such as economics, anthropology, or philosophy in order to comprehend the place of each in the cultural system of European modernity" (Zein-Elabdin 2004, 34). This perspective is necessarily transdisciplinary, given that it transcends the horizons of each discipline. However, it goes

further by also deliberately working to undermine the authority of individual disciplines.

Despite the growing political and academic urgency in understanding how "other" cultures encounter "the West," economics-oriented and politico-economic approaches—including feminist development economics—have been relatively slow to engage with the ideas and challenges posed by postcolonial thought (Pollard, McEwan and Hughes 2011). In their turn, postcolonial approaches have been criticised for their culturalist bias; their marginalisation of "the economic"; and for not engaging with existing economic analyses of land issues, poverty, and wealth creation. Nevertheless, as argued by postcolonial feminist economics (see Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004; and Articles 1, 2, 3 and 5 in this dissertation), postcolonial and decolonising arguments and insights are readily applicable to economic contexts. Yet postcolonial and decolonial critics currently have no discursive authority to speak of economic development (Kapoor 2008; Zein-Elabdin and Chrusheela 2004), and they cannot uncatachrestically—by which I mean redefine and rearrange concepts and meanings produced by the disciplinary discourse of modernity (see Spivak 1996)—claim this concept for which the current historical referent is

development. In this regard, this dissertation attempts, not only to bring economics into dialogue with postcolonialism and the project(s) of decolonisation, but also advocates for mutual engagement amongst them, rather than rejection. I propose that it is possible to reclaim development from a new historical position and in different contexts from those it has so far assumed in economics. Hence, I use transdisciplinary and counter-disciplinary methods as necessary tools with which to resist colonial "techniques of specialist knowledge as they work with strategies of power" (Spivak 1996, 215). Yet, to be sure, my proposal of decolonising feminist economics (Article 3), decolonising feminist approaches to "religion" (Article 4), and decolonising solidarity (Article 5), are necessarily limited by the historical conditions of their own production—which, although an unavoidable problem, may be mitigated, albeit only through constant revision.

b) An Anthropological Approach to Policy

Articles 1, 2, 3 and 5 in this dissertation—all dealing with the politics of development as a set of actions and power relations that impose a hegemonic understanding of development—use an

"anthropological approach to policy" (Escobar 1995, 11; Ferguson 1990) to reveal the politics of making and unmaking development policies. In this vein, an anthropological approach to policy unveils the politics of development, considering them as productive tools that result in concreate practices of thinking and acting. As Colombian-American anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1995, 2016) argues, policy development documents are central mechanisms through which social reality is shaped. Without privileging words over actions, I suggest that development discursive framings are important in shaping both development practice and feminist agendas. Thus, to comprehensively trace contemporary development discourse, I analyse important policy documents that currently inform development regarding Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB); sustainable development; women's economic empowerment; and South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).

In the first Article, "A Critical Look at the Gender Responsive Budgeting Approach in the Development Discourse," I analyse the most recent policy documents on GRB elaborated by the United Nations (UN), mainly the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN) and the World Bank (WB), as well as external research

done by feminist economists on those institutions. In particular, I examine the UN WOMEN global report *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016 Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. In my first Article, I also analyse the WB reports on gender equality highlighted in the World Bank Group on Gender Key Reports Section. In Article 2, "EcoSImies of Care," I critically study the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and examine the WB's *Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development* report (WB 2012); the UN's *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN 2015); and the UNDP's *Integrating Planning & Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities* (UN 2016)—documents that are directly related to current sustainable development discourse. In the third Article, "Decolonising Feminist Development Economics," I critically question the women's economic empowerment development approach and examine the Sustainable Development Goals and the latest UN report on women's economic empowerment by the panel members of the first-ever High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, *Taking Action for Transformational Change on Women's Economic Empowerment* (UN 2017)[7]. In Article 5, "SSTC," I draw upon the recently signed SSTC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Brazil,

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[7] Note Article 4 is not mentioned here since it does not deal with the politics of development.

Mozambique, and the World Bank (WB 2017), and analyse the agricultural development narratives and social imaginaries underlying the MoU to better understand SSTC development patterns and motivations, as well as the concept of solidarity used in the current development framework.

Using an anthropological approach to analyse these policy documents—rather than employing a prescriptive framework about how development policy should be made, implemented, and assessed, as many development practitioners and scholars have tended to do—has allowed me to see more clearly the politics of making and unmaking at work in development policies. In doing so, I have traced the ways in which power creates networks and relations between actors, institutions, and discourses across time and space. Further, this approach has allowed me to explore the connections that exist between levels and forms of social and economic processes and actions, and to expose how these processes work at different levels—the local, the national, the regional, and the global.

c) **Politics of Citation**

"Language resides at the core of any struggle that seeks to decolonize and reconfigure the agendas, mechanisms, and purposes of knowledge production." (Nagar 2008, 120)

One of the feminist practices key to this dissertation is citation, as citation structures are instrumental in the formation of disciplines. According to British-Australian feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2013), "[t]he reproduction of a discipline can be the reproduction of these techniques of selection, ways of making certain bodies and thematics core to the discipline, and others not even part" (1). Indeed, our citation practices make and remake our disciplines or fields of study, forcing some forms of knowledge to the margins while privileging others (Gaztambide-Fernandez, Tuck and Yang 2015). In academic circles, we often cite those who are more renowned, even if their contributions appropriate subordinate, oppressed ways of knowing, struggles, and contributions. As Gaztambide-Fernandez, Tuck and Yang (2015) claim "[w]e also often cite those who frame problems in ways that speak against us. Over time, our citation practices become repetitive; we cite the same people we cited as newcomers to a conversation" (1).

Our practices thereby continue, often without consideration of the politics of connecting knowledges and projects to the same (sometimes weary) reference lists. In that sense, the work of feminism requires persistent attention to feminist genealogies in order to ensure that white settler feminists do not replicate the erasure of the people, the knowledges, and the wisdoms of the Global South in formulation of their feminist theories. Ahmed (2017) writes that citation serves as feminist memory: "Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow" (17). In this dissertation, I cite feminists of colour, Indigenous feminists, Afro-descendent feminists, Indian feminists, African feminists, Chicana feminists, Islamic feminists, and mestizo feminists, as well as Indigenous females, Indigenous peoples, Islamic thinkers, postcolonial feminist artists, de/anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles, and white feminists who have contributed to the project of naming and dismantling the institutions of patriarchal whiteness, and anti/post-capitalism and colonial modernism in issues such as development, economics, and feminism.

Acknowledging and establishing feminist genealogies is part of the work I try to do here in order to produce more just forms of

knowledge and intellectual practice. Ahmed (2013) describes citational practices as a "rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies" (1). In this regard, acknowledging my place as a European, white, settler woman is an important part of this citational practice. Yet, it is not only about *who* you cite, but also *how* you cite. For those of us who are white feminists seeking to produce anti-racist, decolonising work and practices, it is also important to be cautious of the ever-present danger of appropriating Indigenous, Black, brown, trans*, disabled, and queer people of colour; feminist and activist works; as well as the contributions, struggles, and insights of others. Santos (2016) has called this appropriation "cognitive extraction" (27)—that is, transforming alternative epistemologies into raw materials for the production of scientific knowledge.

During the writing and citation process of this introduction and subsequent Articles in this dissertation, I kept the following questions in mind: Who do I choose to link and re-circulate through my work? Who should I stop citing? Who gets erased? I tried to engage with these questions as a "form of conscientious engagement with the politics of citation" (Mott and Cockyane 2017, 956)—as a feminist decolonising practice that is aware of

how practices of citation can be a tool either for the reification of, or resistance to, unethical hierarchies of knowledge production. I agree with Ahmed (2013, 2017) and Indian feminist scholar, creative writer, and theatre worker Richa Nagar (2008) that feminist and anti-racist scholars need to continue having conversations about citational practices—which voices are brought into the conversation(s) (Smith 1999); privilege; the academic excellence of "successful" performances of citation (Ahmed 2013); and how injustice, racism, and unethical relations are perpetuated through citing and knowledge production.

d) Self-Reflexivity and Feminist Politics

"Every research project has a story, which is the story of an arrival." (Ahmed 2012, 2)

"The word itself 'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad

memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful."

(Smith 1999, 1)

My position as a European, white, female researcher, raised in a Catalan and Catholic environment, combined with my previous work with international development organisations as a development practitioner for over eight years in Guatemala, Mozambique, and Geneva, have inevitably shaped the approach of this dissertation. In this regard, critical self-reflexivity becomes a tool to produce a description of this positionality. Yet, although self-reflexivity has advanced feminist engagements with dilemmas of representation making for a more complete analysis of the complexities of the social world, this practice also suffers from serious limitations (Nagar and Geiger 2007). Admissions by Western, white, settler scholars and activists of bad practices and dilemmas may be taken up as signs of good practices and thereby once again centre Western thinking, while the white settler subject obfuscates the structural conditions in which he, they or she is produced. Thus, the question (will) persist(s): how can self-reflexivity be used by white settler scholars to engage in feminist research in a more ethical way?

The necessity of approaching my research with a continued commitment to reflexivity about my own position, motivations, and aims has emerged as a key issue through the Articles, specifically in Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5, in which I directly approach Indigenous and non-Western knowledges. Self-reflexivity, as I understand it, requires a stated ethics in acknowledging and emphasising that knowledge production is always based on, and shaped by, unequal power relations. Yet, approaches to positionality often assume clear self-reflexivity in ways that the very desire to "disclose" complex, multiple, and shifting positionality of the researcher freezes social positions and identities in space and time, excluding any analysis of the manner in which the identities and locations of those who produce knowledge are constituted by, and negotiated in, the process of knowledge production itself (Ahmed 2013; Nagar and Geiger 2007). Given the implication of research in the colonisation of Indigenous peoples and the appropriation of their knowledges, the undertaking of research in collaboration with Indigenous and non-Western knowledges, wisdoms, and peoples is problematic (Nagar and Geiger 2007; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, 2016; Smith 1999; Spivak 1999). It is therefore crucial that white Western people examine their complicity in colonialism, by interrogating who they are in terms of identity, culture, religion, and history, and how these forces shape their lives.

This is part of a practice of critical self-reflexion and of dealing honestly with the impact of dominant cultures on the people of the Global South. This is a white Western effort undertaken in parallel with decolonising projects of the Global South, such as Indigenising (see Smith 1999; and Article 3 in this dissertation); Islamic decolonial thought (Adlbi 2016; also see Article 4 in this dissertation); or Africanising (Mbembe 2015; Thiong'o 1986, 1993).[8] In that sense, the task for Western, white settler subjects would then be to stay implicated in what we critique, turning toward our roles and responsibilities in the histories of racism— to treat them as histories of this present, and to turn away from ourselves and toward others (Ahmed 2004, para. 59). Whilst this is still not sufficient, it may at least clear some ground upon which the work of dismantling structural privilege and exposing racism might provide the conditions for other kinds of work to be undertaken.

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[8] Note that "Africanise" for Thiong'o (1981) has a different meaning that "Africanisation" (Fanon 1963). As explained by Mbembe (2015), for Thiong'o, to "Africanise" is part of a larger politics and the search for what Thiong'o calls a liberating perspective—rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the West and that Africa has to be placed center stage (see Mbembe 2015; Thiong'o 1986).

IV. CONCEPTUAL TOOLS AND DECOLONIAL OPEN PROPOSALS

In this penultimate section of my introduction, I outline the conceptual and analytical tools and decolonial open proposals I have elaborated via the Articles—both for developing a decolonising research imagination, and for the affinities that I have built between them. As follows, I highlight four conceptual and analytical tools that can be mobilised in order to imagine a world without the current development framework (colonialist, capitalist, and patriarchal). Simultaneously, these tools also address the unique and specific impacts of settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, as well as the impacts of a feminist analysis that aims towards a decolonising hegemonic feminism in an age of global capital, transnational corporations, the looming environmental crisis, and xenophobia.

- *EcoSImies of care*. I owe the term ecoSImy in its Spanish version (*ecoSImias*) to Miguel Guaira Calapy, a Coacachi Indigenous leader who suggested "*ecoSImias*" as a term; an analytical category; and a potential tool with which to (re)imagine and (re)think subaltern knowledges (Gudyanas 2004)[9]. Its meaning is related to a popular etymology that assumes economy as the negation of what is mine and/or what is ours, making clear that not just capitalism, but all ecoNOmy is a way of accumulation by dispossession. In Article 2, I formulate and propose ecoSImies of care to question the Homo Economicus as the basic unit of analysis of the economy and thus force the epistemological and ontological pluralisation of economies. Yet, ecoSImies of care are less a critical tool than an attitude reflecting a contemporary awareness of how we live our lives and how to die well. Therefore, they question the very meaning of wealth: what has value in this common place where we all live and die? In that sense, ecoSImies of care propose a transformation of the concept from one that conceives economics as a singular world (ecoNOmies/development) to one that includes the

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[9] In August 24, 2005, during a talk about Economies without money, Miguel Guaira Calapy suggested the notion of EcoSImias within the framework of the PhD in Cultural Studies of the Universidad Simón Bolívar Andean, University Ecuador (Gudyanas 2004).

possibility of antagonistic relations among worlds (ecoSImies of care). EcoSImies of care are, therefore, a decolonising reaction to the violence of the expansionist, universalist logic of capitalist development. They are the possibility for the re-existence and resistance of currently silenced, devalued, and removed economies in development.

- *Coloniality of secularism*. The coloniality of secularism rests on the peculiar premise that the cosmologies, spiritualties, and religions of the overwhelming non-Western/non-Christian majority are ontologically inferior, in this way confirming the superiority of our present modern secular European outlook. Looking at the coloniality of secularism via a decolonising approach reveals the problematic and misleading essentialist construction of a modern secular Europe that fails to recognise Christianity as a foundational part of the past and present of Western/European modernity. In my proposal, the point is not to rehabilitate "religion," nor to prove its benign or progressive character, but rather to open up the religion implicit in the Western European feminist debate so we can have more nuanced and

complex feminist analysis and critical political evaluations without subsuming them too quickly beneath instances of religious fundamentalism or patriarchal reactions. To open and discuss this debate is the task of Article 4.

- *Capital-life conflict*. Development's aim to reconcile the sustainability of the planet with economic growth is based on a structural and unsolvable conflict between capital and life. Either the accumulation of capital is guaranteed, *or* the sustainability of life is guaranteed. Article 5 argues, therefore, that the global economic and political transformations of the last decade can be read as an intensification of the capital-life conflict in three fundamental ways. Firstly, via the physical, ontological, and epistemological invasion and occupation of territories, communities, and their people by the global expansion and accumulation of capital. This includes the appropriation and privatisation of collective life; the destruction of subsistence and (non-) post-capitalist economies; and the annihilation of the knowledges and cultures of these populations and their manner of relating—both to others and to nature. Secondly, via the commodification of life (Pérez Orozco 2014, 2017),

which implies a growing penetration by market forces as the logic of capital accumulation with extractivism and neo-extractivism, and with new investment trade treaties exercised under different modalities—a process that takes place within all aspects of life, including nature. Finally, it can also be read through the financialisation of the economy, which has caused the cycle of financial valorisation to be imposed upon ever wider cycles of capital.

- *Decolonising solidarity*. Solidarity should be directed towards decolonisation. Article 5 makes this claim and suggest that decolonising solidarity is about the politics of (re-) imagining the future, as well as being a tool that is able to show how solidarities often slip into colonial patterns when working together across distance and difference. In this regard, decolonising solidarity means "constructing the conditions for a different kind of encounter that both opposes ongoing colonisation, and seeks to heal the social, cultural, and spiritual ravages of colonial history" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42). Particularly, I suggest that solidarity, in relation to decolonisation, is about centring the sustainability of life, and by extension, building a world that is not based on

exclusion. It is, therefore, about understanding life as premised on the relationship between *difference* and *interdependency*, rather than similarity and the rational calculation of self-interests. Since life today is at the centre of the capital-life dispute and, as claimed in Articles 3 and 5, it is from the sustainability of life that resistances and solidarities should be organised. This enables democratisation and sustains solidarities. While committed in principle to the sustainability of life, solidarities in their relationship with decolonisation cannot determine a priori what kinds of claims are relevant to a given instance because such claims depend on the particularities and complexities of local desires and needs. Thus, it is necessary to understand how the politics of imagining the future and solidarity are infected by their context and what sort of contextual knowledge is needed for those wishing to come to grips with the politics of solidarity in different contexts.

V.   OUTLINE OF THE ARTICLES

Having advanced the key conceptual tools and open decolonial proposals of this research, I now turn to outlining the Articles of the dissertation. Article 1 delimits the theoretical framework underpinning this research and introduces the current dominant discourse and global project of development. This involves explaining that a feminist economic postcolonial analysis can dramatically expand the scope of "the economic," entitling an engagement with power and the complex ways in which power works at multiple scales and contexts—including those of the body, households, and solidarity, which involve possibilities for social change. Article 2 picks up the challenge of expanding "the economic" while engaging with power in a more complex manner. It presents the current global development framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and claims the need for new discourses and modes of representation that shift resource-related debates to open platforms for engaged, decolonising, and decentralised public discourses.

In a similar vein, Article 3 takes a closer look at economic difference and introduces the decolonising approach from which this research stems. Here, a decolonising approach becomes both a task and a process of liberation from assumed modernist

principles of knowledge and understandings of economics, conceptions of nature, and what humans and non-humans are and should be. Detailed analysis is undertaken regarding feminist dilemmas in development and economic patterns within contemporary Mesoamerica, suggesting that a decolonising approach to feminist development economics may offer the possibility of opening up a space for political articulation. Article 4 employs a decolonising approach to feminist theory by exploring the "religion" question in Islamic feminism and in Western European feminism. It advocates for a decolonising feminist approach that opens possibilities to (un)learn and critically review our theories, views, projects, and positions from our particular ways of resistance and liberation. Article 5 contributes to the ongoing project of decolonising knowledge that is so central to this dissertation, and additionally addresses the issue of solidarity raised in Article 1. Article 5 explicitly confronts the inherently political nature of development and its uneven power relations under the current global development 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, particularly in the current extractivist phase of global economic governance. In this sense, I suggest that solidarity should be directed towards decolonisation as a strategy that centres the sustainability of life in all its manifestations as both its stated aim and eventual goal.

The final part of this dissertation consists of an afterword. My closing words reflect upon the peoples and the struggles who decided to go against the tide by imagining development otherwise and/or engaging in decolonising projects specifically against colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy—some of them mentioned in this dissertation. They demonstrate that it is possible to conceive and implement alternatives to prevailing unjust global systems from many different value systems and worldviews. Through these decolonising projects and other emancipatory initiatives around the world new economic models, social organisations, and solidarities are emerging, and with them, a new promise for both social and economic emancipation.

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EPISTEMOLOGIES AT A CROSSROADS

Decolonising Knowledges on Politics of Development,
Economics and Feminism

The Articles compiled in this dissertation are original versions and have been written and submitted in 5 different peer-reviewed academic journals during the time of this research (October 2014 – June 2018) – references and citations have been kept in the same style of referencing as in the submitted version of each Article. During this research period, some of the ideas discussed in the Articles have also been worked and published in different and diverse formats and for non-academic audiences such as in feminist collectives, labs and workshops, policy reports, a book chapter and art research formats/projects.

During February to April 2015 I worked as an independent policy researcher for the 2016 *UN African Human Development Report on Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality in Africa* and from December 2015 to May 2016 I did investigative research for the *UN Regional Framework for Gender and Local Economic Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Some of the ideas elaborated and dilemmas posted in the Articles 1, 3 and 5 partly come from these experiences as independent policy researcher. A preliminary version of my research on *decolonising knowledge* was selected to participate in the Camara Interactiva/Visual Storytelling Programme at the Centre of

Humanities Utrecht University in 2016 and in 2017 I was awarded by BAK *basis voor actuele kunst*, a base for art, knowledge, and the political, in order to attend to the Southern Summer School: Decolonialization in the Netherlands where I had the great opportunity to be part of a creative knowledge exchange with artists, activists and cultural critics from South Africa, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The formulation of the decolonising approach elaborated in the Articles 3 and 4 was partly inspired through that knowledge exchange. Article 4 was motivated by the dilemmas I encountered when I considered to write about the life and thought of Sirin Adlbi Sibai for the book chapter *Sirin Adlbi Sibai – Toward Decolonial Islamic Thought* in the book *Masters of the World* edited by Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

Thanks to a scholarship from the Cultures, Citizenship and Human Rights research focus area from the University of Utrecht, I had the unique opportunity to do a research stay from April to July 2017 in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, in the *Colegio de la frontera Sur-ECOSUR* with the Economic Alternatives Group. Part of Article 2 and the editing of Article 3 were written and discussed in Chiapas. Most of the insights of the Articles have been shared and discussed with the colleagues, friends and teachers I have encountered in these multiple and vital

experiences to whom I thank for their complicity, inspiration and knowledge. The resulting set is an advance of work to come.

**A critical look at the Gender Responsive Budgeting
approach in the development discourse**

A feminist contribution to postcolonial politics of development[10]

[11]

Abstract

Whether, and how, marginalised groups can locate their voices
and achieve change within mainstream development
organisations is one of the driving concerns of both political
scientists interested in policy development and activists seeking
social improvement. In development circles, the Gender

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[11] References and citations have been kept in the same style as in the original
version of the article.

Responsive Budgeting (GRB) approach has come to be seen as an effective tool in strengthening women's voices and interests in policy and budgeting, particularly among the poor and marginalised (UN WOMEN, 2015). Indeed, budgets can play a key role in transforming societies, but much depends on how this approach is used and for whom. Enabling individual females to be better accommodated within highly unjust and unequal patriarchal societies is not enough. In this paper, I analyse how GRB has been framed in the current development discourse from a postcolonial feminist economics lens. I discuss the core GRB assumptions regarding women's oppression and its implications for the female subaltern. In developing the argument, I map the GRB framework's implicit a priori social analysis and its promotion of idealised modernist institutions and reformulated neoliberalism, and I then criticise its widespread assumption that paid labour empowers women. I argue that feminist concepts and political tools like GRB must return to and reaffirm their transformative dimensions, thereby reasserting their association with forms of postcolonial collective action and solidarity that involve possibilities of social change.

> Possible worlds are created by ethical relations, through
> mobilizing resources
> previously left unused.
> Braidotti, 2014, p. 246

I. INTRODUCTION

The mainstream development discourse has shifted in the last years from having a systematic institutional bias against women in economic policy to lauding the importance of offering women a more substantial role in economic development. Central to this shift has been the remarkable rise of microfinance models, where poor women were gradually seen as hardworking, easier to mobilise, more responsible, and better credit risks compared to men. Politically, women were soon imagined as great poverty alleviation agents and gender equality ambassadors that needed a 'helping hand' with their businesses – to help themselves and their families – even as women were integrated more deeply into global circuits of capital. In this vein, 'Women' have become 'the heart of development' (DFID, 2007), 'the secret weapon to beat

hunger' (WFP, 2011), and 'Smart Economics' (WB, 2012). In the words of the UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon: 'As women thrive, so will we all'[12].

In this framework, the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) approach – identifying interventions to address gender gaps in government policies, plans, and budgets – has gained the status of development orthodoxy. It is considered as an efficient tool in making gender equality and women's empowerment 'more than a mantra (...) a lived reality'[13]. Over the last decade, advocates for gender equality in many parts of the world have begun to engage with government budgetary processes, as researchers, organisers of women's groups, elected representatives, or government ministries. These distinct actors have come together under the premise that involving marginalised women more directly in the process of governance makes for 'gender-responsive' citizens, 'gender-responsive' decisions, and 'gender-responsive'

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[12] UN Speech at the 59th opening session on the Commission on the Status of Women. 14 March 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/wom2021.doc.htm.

[13] UN Speech by Michele Bachelet, head of UN Women at that time (10 September 2010 – 15 March 2013) at the Sixty-fifth General Assembly. 11 October 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/gashc3977.doc.htm.

government. Gender-responsive policies are seen as contributing to guaranteeing the access of marginalised women to social services, thus enhancing prospects for economic and political inclusion, and for development (UN WOMEN, 2015b). GRB is understood as a helpful tool to track these policies through the way that budgets respond to women's priorities and the use of government funds to promote gender equality (UN WOMEN, 2015). Therefore, in development circles these days, it would be difficult to find many organisations that are not at least trying to integrate GRB into policy or programming. Even the World Bank, once the object of severe criticism for never truly being able to grasp the concept of 'gender' (Cornwall, Gideon & Wilson, 2008), appears to have acquired a growing interest in GRB and has taken it up with enthusiasm. But such appeal should perhaps give us pause. It may be argued, as this paper does, that GRB has been incorporated into neoliberal discourses with important implications for subaltern females. In this regard, I argue that GRB appears to convey one thing but, in practice, has been deployed to legitimise and reinforce existing unjust structures and relationships. Further, it has had the function of ensuring that resistance and the desire for transformation remain out of the picture.

GRB arose from a feminist critique of government, macroeconomic policy, and the professed neutrality of economic tools. It is an important right-based means for citizens to hold governments accountable to what they have signed up to. Both scholars and activists, however, have repeatedly expressed concern over the ways in which some of the 'small' ideas initiated in localised contexts by feminist analysis and women's struggles become 'big' ideas when appropriated by international development organisations. They have noted how this process can 'crowd out' alternative, locally derived strategies (Nagar, 2003) and shape Gender and Development (GAD) agenda(s). At the core of GRB is a claim of democratizing budgetary and macroeconomic policies and promoting women's economic empowerment for 'more and better jobs, higher incomes, better access to and control over resources and assets, and greater security' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p. 234). However, enabling individual women to be better accommodated within a highly unjust and unequal patriarchal society is not enough. Budgets can play a role in transformation as many feminist and development practitioners have argued, but much depends on how this tool is used and for whom. In this paper, I analyse how GRB has been framed in the current development discourse. I discuss the core GRB assumptions regarding women's oppression and its implications for the female subaltern from a critical feminist postcolonial approach. In developing the argument, I pull out the

GRB framework's implicit a priori social analysis and its promotion of idealised modernist institutions and criticise the widespread assumption within GRB narratives that paid labour empowers women, an argument mainly made by feminist economists.

This paper is positioned in the intersection of three major debates in postcolonial studies: neoliberalism, feminist political economy, and development. Neoliberalism concerns the extent to which recent shifts in global governance and economic policy represent a change from the agenda pursued in the late 1980s, where the emphasis was on 'market fundamentalism'[14]. Since the 1990s, conversations about international development recognize a role for states in building the institutions necessary for free markets to flourish, and international development organisations articulate explicit social concerns regarding inclusion of the marginalised, poverty eradication, and equity. Conditionality has now been officially abandoned, replaced by an idea of country ownership, and increased emphasis has been placed by development organisations on 'gender-responsive' governance as an arena for donor intervention and direction. These shifts have

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[14] Here, it refers to the insistence on a single path for the Third World, one that believes that market forces and transnational corporations work best, regardless of Third World institutions and industrial state.

led to the emergence of what has commonly been labelled post-Washington Consensus or 'neoliberalism with a human face' (Molyneux, 2006, p. 430). In this deepening project, I argue that, as a contemporary development policy instrument, GRB is distinctive in its invocation of 'women's economic empowerment', 'participation', and 'gender-responsive' and in its attempts to engender changes as a condition for promoting modernist political liberalism and market success. By so doing, development organisations reinscribe an ethnocentric ideology in modernist developmentalism that legitimates and naturalises power, reproducing unequal relations and, therefore, epistemic violence. Thus, in this framework, GRB does not 'speak truth to power' as feminist analysis and feminist collectives have framed it but, on the contrary, accommodates and naturalises power.

It must be noted that economics has long been a hegemonic discipline within the field of development (Zein-Elabdin & Charusheela, 2004). As a discipline, it has upheld narratives of 'development' and 'poverty' more than any other discipline, organising what it means to be poor (or underdeveloped or rural) or wealthy (or industrialised or developed) (Kapoor, 2008). Due to economics centrality in development discourses and progress on 'mainstreaming' gender equality concerns since the United Nations Decade for Women, it is not surprising that feminist

economics and its objects of study – i.e. the division of labour by gender, race, and nation; women's position and status in labour markets; the importance of social reproduction; and the increasing disparities of wealth and income that accompany globalisation – have gotten much attention for the development agenda. Feminist economics has contributed immeasurably to interrogating economics as an hegemonic discourse in development, criticised the presumed gender-neutrality of development policy outcomes, and brought up questions about the ways in which gender intersects with race, sexuality, and class. Yet it is constantly challenged by its modernist bias and teleological assumptions about history and society highlighted in postcolonial feminist discussions (see Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1999; Charusheela, 2008).

The strong analytical emphasis on 'women' in feminist economics analysis in development discourses, coupled with the profound influence of modernist philosophy (Zein-Elabdin, 2004), leads to a certain treatment of nonwestern societies that overlooks patterns of immense relevance to feminist economics. Given the overlap between gender and other historical instruments of domination and hegemony in development, for instance colonialism and cultural hegemony (i.e. the cultural bias of colonial Europe), the particularity of women's economic

subordination can be carried only up to a point, and gender itself cannot be fully structured as an analytical category (see Zein-Elabdin & Charusheela, 2004). I locate this essay within such difficulties, looking critically to the GRB narratives within the development discourse and proposing a postcolonial feminist contribution to politics of development.

Placing the mainstream development discourse (henceforth development) – i.e. the dominant representations and institutional practices that structure the relationships between the 'modern' West and the Third World – alongside postcolonialism and feminist critique turns out to be a highly productive exercise[15]. It helps us to examine strategies to decolonise development and locate radical and postcolonial feminist solidarities. Second, it provides a basis from which to criticise the modernist universalisms in the development discourse for legitimating uneven structural power and perpetuating gender inequities. In this vein, a postcolonial feminist economics approach to politics of development follows a transdisciplinary method:

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[15] I recognize the problematic nature of homogenizing dichotomies such as West(ern) and the Third World. Here, drawing on Kapoor (2008), I use these terms to refer to an unequal structure of knowledge production, rooted in postcolonial hierarchies. I use the term 'Third World' in this essay well aware of its pejorative meanings.

Instead of drawing on material from different disciplines that maintain their philosophical core and methodological tools, a transdisciplinary method reveals the common preanalytical premises of different disciplines. Thus, a feminist postcolonial approach to development would push feminist economists to look anew meaning of development, empowerment and so on. (Zein-Elabdin, 2004)

To this extent, I use a transdisciplinary method to what in Arturo Escobar's terms is an 'anthropological approach to policy', whereby policies are understood to be productive instruments that result in concrete practices of thinking and acting (1995, p. 11). As Escobar and others who focus on the productive power of development organisations argue, policy documents are central mechanisms in which social reality is shaped. Without privileging words over actions, I suggest here that discursive framings are important in shaping development practice and feminist agendas.

Thus, to comprehensively trace the current GRB development discourse, I analyse the last policy texts on GRB elaborated by the United Nations (UN), mainly the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN

WOMEN), and the World Bank (WB) – the world's largest and most influential development organisation – as well as external research done by feminist economists for those institutions. Particularly, I examine the last UN WOMEN global report Progress of the World's women 2015-2016. Transforming economies, realizing rights and the key documents (n=20) and public statements posted in the official UN WOMEN website on GRB since these are the same documents used in the WB current GRB approach[16]. I also analyse the World Bank reports on gender equality highlighted in the World Bank Group on Gender Key Reports Section (n=8) [17]. The next section, Section II, lays out the universal modernist normative assumptions of Gender Responsive Budgeting. Section III questions development insistence on locating female subaltern voices, and Section IV provides a conclusion.

II.   GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AND ITS NORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

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[16]   See   http://wbi.worldbank.org/boost/tools-resources/topics/general-techniquestopics/gender-budgeting

[17] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender

GRB was pioneered in the Australian women's budget model in 1994. It was initiated and developed by the women's movements, specifically by the Australia's 'femocrats' (Sawer, 2002). Interest in gender-responsive budget analysis, by women's movements, governments, and NGOs, accelerated following the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The UN Conference endorsed GRB and included it in the Platform for Action ratified by 189 states. This global call for gender mainstreaming and analysis of actual government expenditure and revenue aimed to further the key themes of government accountability for its gender equality commitments. But, what is being done in the name of Gender Responsive Budgeting? While GRB in development discourse appears to resound with participation and empowerment, it camouflages strong modernist assumptions of a universal technology of governamentality and developmentalist modernism. As used here, modernism is

> a social vision that includes a liberal-democratic nation-state, an industrial capitalist economy, and a series of other specific institutions of public life and "civil society", reframing a particular mode of interaction between individuals, individuals and the state, and individuals and society. (Charusheela, 2008, p. 47)

In the GRB framework, there are two general assumptions regarding female oppression in the Third World. The first one, a central tenet of feminist economics, is that unpaid care and domestic labour (housework or household production) constitutes a form of women's exploitation (UN CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 16). It is also argued that unpaid and domestic work is not accorded the status of an economic activity in the budgets, nor is it incorporated in any meaningful way into mainstream economic analysis.

> Unpaid care and domestic work severely limits women's economic opportunities. Recognizing the economic value of this work, reducing its drudgery and redistributing it more equally between women and men, and between households and society, is critical for the achievement of substantive equality. (UN WOMEN, 2015, p. 70)

GRB is considered a helpful tool to recognise unpaid work as 'an essential part of the formal economy' (Caglar, 2013, p. 259) and therefore key to achieve gender equality (UN WOMEN, 2015). However, if we take a critical feminist postcolonial perspective we see that fitting unpaid care and domestic labour into new definitions of economic activity does not necessarily achieve feminist goals. The concept 'unpaid care and domestic labour',

for example, is itself a theoretical abstraction that excludes much of the work performed by Third World women as part of their unpaid domestic responsibilities, largely because it is a concept constructed in opposition to '(decent) work' as experienced and defined in the west (Wood, 1997). Here, a two sector model that celebrates the market is implicit. It separates the household (traditional institution, unpaid work) and the market/society (progress, paid work), even when they occur in the same household and are done by the same woman simultaneously.

For example, UN WOMEN (2015, p. 83) uses the concept of unpaid care and domestic work in two ways: a) 'Unpaid work that involves the production of goods for self-consumption (e.g. collecting water or firewood)' and b) 'Unpaid work that involves the provision of services for self-consumption (e.g. cooking or cleaning as well as person-to-person care)'. Why is firewood or collecting water the production of a good, but cleaning or cooking a meal is a service? There are many meals prepared in non-western contexts that are meant partly for the market and partly for self-consumption. Is the distinction to be made based on whether the meal is primarily intended for the market so that 'leftovers' are consumed at home, or it is primarily meant for home consumption, and leftovers are for sale? If a meal is cooked with some idea of how much will be marketed and how much will

be consumed, is only part of the labour involved in producing that meal excluded (Wood, 1997)? How much? There is surely a large percentage of water hauled that is meant exclusively for self-consumption, with the 'possibility' of selling the water being no more important to the person doing the work than its use in washing clothes. This approach assumes that the main cause of women's subordination lies in their exclusion from employment and ('formal') market and consequent entrapment and isolation in the household. Thus, the key to women's emancipation lies here in their entry into the workplace (see UN WOMEN, 2015; UN WOMEN, 2015b). However, by choosing to maintain the distinction household/market, unpaid care and domestic labour continue to be marginalised at all levels of economic analysis and budgets, even though feminist economists and UN WOMEN are claiming for the need to recognise it. Further, one cannot assume a priori that women's 'formal' employment will be translated in greater freedom and equality. As Charusheela (2003, p. 298) argues, '[t]he actual experience of work, far from being a liberation from the bonds of home, was and is often demeaning, undignified, and oppressive.'

The second assumption is that female subordination is found in 'traditional' patriarchy and placed in the 'household' or the sphere of the family and that 'efficient' budget allocations can

amend it, as feminist economist Stephanie Seguino argues in the UN WOMEN GRB Policy Brief:

> Through its budget allocations, the state has the potential to redress inequalities and discrimination in the household, in asset ownership, and in labor and credit markets. This can be achieved through various measures including spending on education and training that close gender gaps, investments in access to health care, and expenditures that reduce women's care burden. (Seguino, 2013, p. 6)

Here, inequalities and oppression are located in the household but never found in the actual politics of institutionalisation itself – i.e. the process through which social institutions operate and reproduce themselves. Far from the nuanced understandings and analysis of the specificities of gender relations as power relations that feminist scholars and activists have advocated, we are left here with 'gender' as a descriptive term that is reduced to a monochromatic simplification. Further, in this approach, GRB is seen as a tool to simply disaggregate various equations into man and woman components in a 'gender-responsive' way to close 'gender gaps', adding 'women' and 'men' subscripts into variables in already existing categories and frameworks. None of this allows for a conceptualisation of either the relations between

gender and poverty or how the process of impoverishment implicates gender relations, gender resistance and transformative solidarities. Feminist thought today examines those mechanisms of power through which unstable and contingent performances are stabilised into behaviours that 'operate as a policing force which generates and legitimizes certain practices, experiences, etc., and curtails and delegitimizes others' (Nicholson 1998, p. 293). Hence, we should not begin with pre-given gendered definitions of economic activities and 'inefficient' households that treat gender as an individual manner and leave the structure untouched but with an analysis that deals with complexities, the specific context, and the dynamics of power.

Many GRB initiatives apply a gender analysis to the formulation and implementation of the budgets that is usually an 'explanation' about gender bias and discrimination and 'explains' how a society is organised and functions (see UN WOMEN 2015). However, the concomitant question is: what type of analysis is used? Take, for example, the UN WOMEN'S GRB mission statement:

> GRB initiatives seek to create enabling policy frameworks, build capacity and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to support accountability to women (...) Our work aims to strengthen policy, planning and budgeting

processes at national and local levels for improved government accountability, transparency and service delivery. The full and equal participation of women and civil society is central to achieve these objectives[18]. (emphasis mine)

The reconfiguration of state-society relations that is taking place here is a view of the 'state', 'civil society', and 'participation' as an universal ahistorical normative ideal of an appropriate institutional unit for social organization (i.e. nation state), portraying it as an autonomous and homogenous technology of institutions and 'women' as a homogenous monolith.

What this discussion seems to ignore is the need to understand both the state and civil society as heterogeneous and mutually constitutive terrains of contestation as well as the differences, complexities, and heterogeneities of the lives of women (Mohanty, 1991). This approach calls for a view of governance participation as a contingent outcome that negotiates relations in a pre-existing terrain that constrains and facilitates particular kinds of actions and goes beyond the introduction of standard 'good-governance' packages (i.e. accountability, transparency,

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[18] Retrieved from: http://www.gender-budgets.org/

and social delivery) associated with WB liberal democratic reform progress (see WB, 1992). In this liberal framework, 'gender-responsive' governance is not an outcome or consequence of development but a necessary condition for development. Although the WB and UN WOMEN argue their work is mainly management of development policy rather than politics, it is quite clear that 'good-governance', and its reformulated 'gender-responsive' approach, is a package for liberal-democracy or a 'democratic capitalist reform based on the Western model' (Chan, 2002, p. 17), with a specific and deliberate focus on marginalised women being added. This implies that a policy framework (i.e. 'democracy') can be inserted at almost any stage in the developmental process of any society irrespective of its social structure, power dynamics, economic conditions, political traditions, and external relations, and that it will enhance development. Using this perspective, development organisations use GRB with a focus on 'fixing' gaps rather than understanding power dynamics of a specific context.

Redolent with purpose, GRB resounds with a decisive ring of social justice and citizen engagement. It evokes a participatory approach where everyone gets a chance to take part in making the decisions that affect their lives and where opportunities exist for all to thrive. Yet it masks unequal power structures and gender

myth-making with iconic images of women – i.e. women are more industrious and responsible than men; 'good mothers'; peace-makers; women care more for children and the environment – (Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2007) to make the world that the neoliberal model would have us inhabit. For example, The World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim claimed:

> [T]he great news is that gender equality doesn't require trade-offs; it only has benefits. And the benefits accrue to everyone, not just women and girls. Societies benefit and as even MEN are beginning to understand, economies benefit, too. That's good news for all of us. The governors of the World Bank Group have set ambitious goals to end extreme poverty by 2030 and to boost shared prosperity for the bottom 40 percent of the population in developing countries. If we are to reach those goals, investing wisely in women and girls needs to be a major part of our work. (...) [G]iven the evidence we already have about the role of women – the world will be more peaceful, more prosperous, more just and worthy of the mothers who gave birth to us all[19].

[19] Remarks by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim. 5 March 2014 at CARE Conference on Gender Equality. Retrieved from:

Here, we see how the result of listening to previously silenced voices, with a focus on women's agency – instead of victimhood – has been now replaced by the no less essentialist vision of the Third World woman as a heroine. Also, this vision posits the Third World man as absent or irremediable. These representations of the Third World woman supplement what Tsing (1993, p. 172) discusses as the 'invocation of the narrative of progress and development to justify why and how development is "done", particularly to women'. Thus, all this gender-making makes for a promise to investors of a safe bet, and a guaranteed return.

These essentialist generalisations have a marked tendency to reproduce and reinforce deeply conservative notions of womanhood, women's role within the family, the 'good mother', and heteronormativity as 'the norm'. And, again, this has decisively shifted attention away from both material structures of power and gender ideologies. Foucault (2000) has shown that a range of institutions that affect our lives can play interlocking disciplining roles that draw on, naturalise, and reproduce a discursive structure of 'normal' or 'proper' gender performances or 'plausible' households. In this vein, normative heterosexuality

http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/_speech/2014/03/05/remarks-world-bank-group-president-jim-yong-kim-gender

is not simply a form of sexual expression but it also 'defines a normal way of life' (Jackson, 2005 quoted in Bedford, 2009). Thus, government budgets and policies do not simply place women in a lower position than men. They literally participate in constructing a 'normalised' heteronormative family by the way in which they treat females, single mothers, migrants, and same sex partners. Essentialising women's concerns leaves little scope for females to participate as citizens rather than as 'good-responsible consumer mothers'. This use of ideas about 'gender' that rely on essentialised images of women (and men) may be one reason why mainstream gender-responsive discourses in development so often tend towards universalism.

Despite the emphasis on power relations and the relational dimensions of inequality and inequity that are part and parcel of feminist scholarship, agendas and, activism, GRB is often conflated with neoliberal ideological projections of an average Third World woman being more concerned with 'responsibility' (i.e. better and efficient neoliberal subjects). Indeed, GRB is repeatedly understood as a universal tool to simply disaggregate various equations into women versus men into already existing gendered economic categories rather than as an analytical and transformative approach that looks at the gendered economic structures. Thus, 'gender-responsibility' has run adrift, as once-

focused energies have been dissipated and have then made 'gender' equal to 'woman' or 'women versus men'. By so doing, desire for structural change is increasingly constructed as not only irrelevant, but culturally insignificant to postcolonial contexts. If GRB is spun into an apoliticised practical tool, then its use in development policy may offer little hope of a world free of gender inequities and inequalities that GRB had previously evoked.

III. FEMALE SUBALTERN VOICES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

Why do development organisations insist, especially now, in an age of transnational capitalism, on listening to Third World women's previous silenced voices? Spivak suggests that there is ideological significance to the 'revision of women in-development (modernization) to gender-and development (New World Economic Order)' (Spivak 1999, p. 223). That this transition is tied to a new need – and constant insistence – to listen to subaltern voices is equally significant, not least because it 'apparently grants the woman free choice as subject' (p. 291). More recently, Spivak has used the notion of 'the new subaltern' in order to highlight global capitalism's current interests in appropriating rural Indigenous female's labour and knowledge(s)

for capitalist profit (Spivak, 2000). In this vein, we see that women's empowerment in the development agenda has come to be associated with a model of individual self-improvement and donor interventions rather than solidarity, collective struggle and feminist resistance.

The WB 2014 Report Voice and Agency. Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity highlights this neoliberal consensus of disciplining the subaltern female body as the 'solution' to poverty:

> Removing constraints and unleashing women's full productive potential can yield enormous dividends that help make whole societies more resilient and more prosperous (...) [C]onstraining women's agency by limiting what jobs women can perform or subjecting them to violence, for example, can create huge losses to productivity and income with broader adverse repercussions for development. We argue that overcoming these deprivations and constraints is central to efforts to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. (Klugman et al., 2014, p. 2)

Here, this narrative uses a 'feminisation of responsibility' as a survival approach and offers women entry into labour markets (also see UN WOMEN, 2015, p. 8). Yet it continues to devalue female labour and does nothing to challenge the structural inequalities that produce and sustain their disempowerment. So, only insofar as there is a coincidence between women's needs and labour force participation as well as market growth along lines defined in a modernist way, will those needs be considered for policy implementation.

Hence, this approach aims at 'disciplining' subaltern females bodies – by the state, the market, and development organisations – in order to transform individual powers into labour-power. Further, the use of 'agency' in this context frequently has the effect of 'reassuring us that women do in fact exercise choice in situations where structural constraints mean that women are simply "choosing" survival' (Wilson, 2011, p. 317). This instrumentalisation of marginalised women is perhaps best epitomized in the UN WOMEN slogan: Equality means business. Gender equality itself is here depicted as 'smart economics' in that it enables women to contribute their utmost skills and energies to the project of world economic development. Yet, as the Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar's (2006) work has shown, attention to collective action to enable women to challenge

structural discrimination has been downplayed by development discourse in analysis of what women's empowerment means in non-western contexts.

In the apparent absence of any problematisation of the current global order, the 'positivity' of contemporary development images and discourse, from which any contradictions seem to have been removed, implicitly confirms neoliberal narratives. In a reworking of modernist representations, relations of oppression and exploitation are thus obscured, or reconfigured as 'impediments' that can be overcome through hard work, self-improvement, and a helping hand from the development practitioner/western(ised) consumer. The relatively recent emphasis on 'listening' and 'giving voice' to the female subaltern and on her point of view has resulted in increased publication and dissemination of testimonial short stories such as the 'In the words of...' UN WOMEN section or the UN WOMEN Global information hub that features 'diverse voices, testimonies of personal experiences and achievement' with colourful pictures of smiling and laughing 'working' females[20]. While these initiatives could be an opportunity to take seriously diverse females' own agency from non-western contexts, locations, and experiences, it

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[20] Retrieved from: http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2014/5/beijing-plus-20-campaign-launch-press-release

has played into the hands of neoliberal institutions and policymakers. These testimonies and short stories have become a useful tool to promote individual agency that requires marginalised females' voices to constitute them as rational and neoliberal economic actors in the service of modernist developmentalism. These narratives are presented as a set of women's voices and 'best' GRB experiences on the ground compiled by UN WOMEN bureaucrats. Yet these stories connect a discourse of freedom – through the introduction of subaltern females into capitalistic markets – in which the causal links between literacy, work skills, and gender equality are presumed, with an instrumentalist view of liberating women from the shackles of an oppressive and violent culture.

They thereby pay scant attention to the structural roots of women's disempowerment. One such example is the UN WOMEN Budgets respond to the needs of women section. The first testimony you find is that of Fadma from Morocco, 'one of the beneficiaries of the [UN WOMEN GRB] programme':

> Before I was housewife and was in charge of domestic work. One day I decided to change my life and I joined classes. For two years, I learned to read and to write. I also learned Arabic, calligraphy and plastic arts. Today, I

create my own paintings and with the other women in my course, we decided to create a cooperative to better market our products.[21]

The modernist logic here seems to be the creation of a productivist society where subaltern females are constructed as naturally inclined towards precisely 'promising opportunities and entry points for lasting transformation' such as education (Klugman et al., 2014) and the market. For example, the UN WOMEN Progress of the world's women Report for 2015-2016, the Chapter 2 Recommendations Section states:

> Enable women's lifelong access to education, training and mentoring, including basic literacy, on-the-job training to upgrade their skills and training in nontraditional skills to support them to move up the occupational ladder (UN WOMEN, 2015 p. 95)

However, by assuming that those without literacy are not yet equipped for or are incapable of undertaking income-generating work at a level of those who are literate, international organisations institutionalise literacy as a criterion for attaining equal access of jobs or resources. What if literacy is used and

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[21] Retrieved from: http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/3/budgets-respondto-the-needs-of-women-in-morocco

indeed promoted by development organisations to justify the unequal labour market and exclude subaltern females and privileged educated elites (Charusheela, 2008)? I am not suggesting that Fadma may not benefit in some ways from these policies or that education is not a goal in itself or that literacy programmes are not useful in some contexts. Rather, I question the universal emancipatory role of education that the GRB mainstream narrative claims. If poverty is attributed to a lack of education, there is a counterpart assumption that the privileges enjoyed by educated people are appropriate and merit. So, normalising privilege creates inequality and makes mechanisms that institutionalise inequality invisible to us.

In rejecting a modernist representation of subaltern females we must allow not only the possibility that some females may actually be housewives, or illiterate, or traditional, but also that these may not be deficient characteristics (Charusheela, 2008). So, is literacy essential for comprehending issues or for locating voices and being heard? If it is really about locating voices and being heard, a serious and more complex analysis is required about why other voices are not heard and whether simply a causal relationship between illiteracy and gender equality and literacy and women's employment will be enough. As Charusheela (2008, p. 9) puts it, 'learning to read and write in a local language may

not make one better able to reach the English [and Arabic UN]-language email world of global NGOs and transnational organisations'. Thus, by uncritically privileging literacy as a main strategy of GRB and in its gender analysis, the higher value accorded to the literate is naturalised and normalised, which legitimises the very power structures that the GRB claims to be undoing.

Critical evaluation of the current status of the GRB in development discourse points to the conclusion that its political and analytical bite has been blunted not only by a lack of gender analysis but also by modernist discourses that accommodate neoliberal ideology and impose western moral authority. Refusing to regard questions of social analysis as settled as well as declining to take the idealised modernist institutions of political liberalism for granted, GAD and feminist economists contributions could reflect beyond a project of adding gender responsiveness and closing gaps to neoliberal and ethnocentric metanarratives and budgets. Further, listening to previous silenced voices in postcolonial contexts is certainly more complex than development practitioners envision it to be, and may be impossible in the way that they intend.

IV.   FINAL REMARKS

In this article, I have analysed the GRB approach in development discourse from a postcolonial feminist perspective. I have worked out the ways in which development organisations shift the spotlight away from structural issues of social and economic justice onto the self-improving individual and modernist developmentalism. I have highlighted that, by so doing, it dislocates feminist agendas from precisely the concern with relational dimensions of power that animated GRB initiatives in the first place.

If GRB is to be useful, it must be recuperated as a critical and transformative analytical approach from its current use as a modernist descriptive tool for 'disciplining' the female subaltern and locates women's oppression in the family and kinship. Gathering sex-segregated numbers as GRB or producing descriptive documents that claim to portray a self-liberated and entrepreneurial woman in the Third World must be disrupted. Neither these, nor the ubiquitous term 'gender-responsibility' have much to do with feminist knowledge concerned with making visible and transforming inequitable power relations and assessing specific people and places and comprehending the

contexts in which people live. Rather, it perpetuates epistemic violence by linking the subaltern to a modernist progressive cultural transformation with the gift of the individual since the very same institutions and processes that enable and support the promised freedoms of individuals do not reach them. We gain much more from our feminist conversations if we critically refocus attention on the issues of power and build feminist analysis on globalisation that does not simply recognise the importance of gender in economic processes. A feminist economics postcolonial analysis can dramatically expand the scope of 'the economic', entitling an engagement with power and the complex ways in which power works at multiple scales and contexts, including those of the body and households. Further, a feminist economics postcolonial analysis of the politics of development can emphasise different forms of female agency and therefore call attention to the resilience, collective actions, solidarities, and creativity through which people and communities survive, negotiate, and resist global processes that involve possibilities for social change.

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ARTICLE 2

ECOSIMIES OF CARE:

A proposal for decolonising 'sustainable development'[22] [23]

Abstract

This article focuses on questions of power, colonialism, and capitalist relations in order to understand and disrupt the dominant discourse and project of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By doing so, I analyse its mainstream sustainable development conceptual framework (WB 2012; UN 2015; UNDP 2016) and argue that it has become profoundly problematic, even seriously unthinkable, to do good work under

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[22] Article published in Carrasco-Miró, Gisela. 2017. "EcoSImies of Care: A Proposal for Decolonizing 'Sustainable Development'". *Insurgencies from the South and Human Right: From the European South*, *(2)*, 89–108.

[23] References and citations have been kept in the same style as in the original version of the article.

the current 'development' framework, with its modernist and extractivist premises of bounded individualism and human exceptionalism. Concurrently, I argue there is an urgent need for new discourses and modes of representation that shift resource-related debates to open platforms for engaged, decolonising, and decentralised public discourse. Drawing on feminist, Indigenous, and decolonial art and critical environmentalist knowledges, I propose 'ecoSImies of care' as a way to think beyond the dead end of sustainable development green capitalism and to resurrect a limit to growth and sustainability of life discourses and practices. In this sense, ecoSImies of care open a radical way of imagining the economy and Economics as multiple, inter-eco-dependent, and polyvocal, and as bringing together social-political insights in a contextual and situated manner for sustainable futures.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) adopted *The Future We Want* declaration for addressing global changes in the framework of sustainable development and its dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. The Rio+20 conference announced the arrival of

the Anthropocene with a video titled *Welcome to the Anthropocene* and called all States to take measures as soon as possible to maintain the integrity of the Earth environment (UNDP 2012a). The British-accented, female android voiceover in the video invited the audience to reflect on the "relentless pressure" humanity inflicted on the planet now that "we have entered the Anthropocene", and that we should have confidence that "our creativity, energy, and industry offer hope".[24] *The Future We Want* and the *Welcome to the Anthropocene* in UNCSD Rio+20 set the basis for the current global development agenda *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter referred to as 2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Meeting the SDGs will cost an estimated $3 trillion a year (The Economist 2015) and, according to the 2030 Agenda, the Agenda and the SDGs are a

> plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. […] All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to

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[24] *Welcome to the Anthropocene* – a Film About the State of the Planet. UN Rio+20 Summit 2012. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTk11idmTUA. Accessed May 31, 2018.

take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. (UN 2015, 5)

Nevertheless, no agreement on cutting greenhouse gases has been made to date; instead, economic growth has been delinked from the use of natural resources, and sustainable development has overwritten sustainable ecology.

The Kari-Oca 2 Declaration, agreed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in parallel with the UNCSD Rio+20 meeting and signed by over 500 grassroots Indigenous Peoples,[25] states:

> We see the goals of UNCSD Rio+20, the 'Green Economy', and its premise that the world can only 'save' nature by commodifying its life-giving and life-sustaining capacities as a continuation of the colonialism that Indigenous Peoples and our Mother Earth have faced and resisted for 520 years. (Kari-Oca 2 Declaration 2012)

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[25] The Kari-Oca 2 declaration is a sacred document that encompasses Indigenous Peoples struggles worldwide.

The Kari-Oca 2 Declaration, along with the Major Group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), rejected the *The Future We Want*, arguing that the negotiated text did not account for scientifically measured environmental thresholds or effective mechanisms that could actually change current unsustainable development practices. They have claimed that the document does not actually represent a future that anybody wants. Despite the promises to leave no one behind, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (2015), UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, claims that "Indigenous Peoples have been all but erased from the [2030] development agenda" (1). In this context, the present article asks: Why is it suddenly necessary (again) to specify that development has to be sustainable? What, exactly, is to be sustained in sustainable development? Is 'development' the only answer to thinking about sustainability and climate crisis?

To engage with these questions, this text analyses what the mainstream development discourse – i.e. the dominant representations and institutional practices that structure the relationships between west and non-west (hereinafter referred to as 'development') – means by sustainability. By doing so, I critically explore the dominant sustainable development narratives and projects (hereinafter referred to as 'sustainable development') and examine how the economy and 'the

economic' are thought within it. As Ilan Kapoor (2008) and Eiman Zein-Elabdin and S. Charusheela (2004) argue, the discipline of Economics has an unmistakable authority in 'development' and its imagination as part of western modernity, which stems from its self-presentation as a rational and neutral science supported by empirical methods and professional management techniques.[26] Timothy Mitchell (2002), however, observed that the idea of economy and the economic has curiously remained unexplored by critical theory, in contrast with other concepts such as "class, nation, culture, society, gender, race, personhood, and many others" (3). In this regard, the text that follows aims to explore the idea of 'the value' in the economy and the economic while critically looking at the current 'sustainable development' approach and its key dimensions: environmental (natural capital), economic (inclusive green economy/growth), and social (poverty eradication). By doing so, this text takes a decolonising approach, which is seen as a political, anti-colonial sensibility and a suit of practices and theoretical approaches that seek to disrupt and contrast hegemonic western ways of knowing, writing, and seeing the world.

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[26] Western modernity serves here as a social vision that includes a liberal-democratic nation-state, an industrial capitalist economy, and a series of specific institutions of public life and 'civil society', requiring a particular mode of interaction between individuals, individual, and state and individual and society (Charusheela 2008).

While 'sustainable development' has ecological, economic, and social aspects, I argue that its basis remains deeply modernist, extractivist, and capitalogenic. If we are to speak about a more-than-human world, it will not suffice to build a cultural and social vocabulary through a human-centric development discourse that views the Earth primarily as a provision or sphere of human perceptions, experience, and control. To decentre such anthropocentric perspectives, a decolonising shift in economic thinking is needed. Thus, the assumption in 'sustainable development' that everything we encounter is a resource for human consumption and production must be challenged, as this capitalogenic paradigm has led directly to countless environmental and social disasters. Drawing upon feminist, Indigenous, and decolonial art and environmentalist knowledges, I suggest the notion of 'ecoSImies of care' to open up a radical way of imagining the economy and Economics: as multiple, polyvocal, and decolonising, and as bringing together social, political and economic insights in a contextual manner for sustainable futures. I owe the term ecoSImies, in its Spanish version (ecoSImia), to Miguel Guaira Colapy, a Cotacachi Indigenous leader who suggested it as an analytical category to contain subaltern knowledges. I formulate ecoSImies as 'ecoSImies of care' here to question an anthropocentric economy

based on accumulation by appropriation and dispossession (ecoNOmies) and to radically situate 'taking care of life' at the very centre of economy and Economics (ecoSImies of care) for our sustainable futures.

In the next section, I explore the historical concept of sustainable development and analyse its similarities with the Anthropocene. Section III centres on questions of power, colonialism, and capitalist relations in order to analyse the integrated sustainable development multidimensional framework. I argue that 'sustainable development' tells a capitalogenic story that climaxes with a modernist framework based on human-centric individualism, extractivism, and privatisation. In Section IV, I propose ecoSImies of care to show the radical affirmation that all humans are already inter-eco-dependent and how it opens possible sustainable futures. Here, I also suggest three ethical economic criteria for the sustainability of life. In Section V, I conclude by rejecting hope as a political strategy and taking a critical position that enables us to recast economic endeavours in light of the 21st-century crises.

II.   IT IS NOT ABOUT CARBON…

'Sustainable development' is not a new buzzword in 'development'. The current 'sustainable development' paradigm is derived mostly from the 1987 Brundtland Report by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as *Our Common Future*. Prominently defined in the Brundtland Report, 'sustainable development' is still mainly referred to as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN 1987, 43; UN 2015). In the Brundtland Report, as well as in the Rio+20 *The Future We Want* document and its subsequent 2030 Agenda, there is an intent to reconcile Economics with Ecology (understood as separate disciplines) in order to protect the environment from pollution, deforestation, the greenhouse effect, and climate change and, at the same time, to ensure the pursuit of economic growth, which was – and still is – considered a condition for general happiness. Thus, the recurrent assumption in 'development' is that development policy need to prioritise economic growth for global well-being and – based on the west's industrialisation experiences – goals and strategies are designed and implemented to help fulfil people's material needs first. There is, however, no consideration here about the culture of growth-focused policy (i.e. capitalism and modernism), portraying, thereby, 'sustainable development' as objective and culturally neutral, transportable everywhere.

The 2030 Agenda foregrounds climate change as an inevitable and urgent global challenge with long-term implications for 'sustainable development' in all countries (UN 2017, 2015). For example, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 aims "to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (UN 2017, 1). One of the targets of SDG 13 is to mobilise $100 billion per year by 2020 to address the climate-related needs of developing countries and to continue that level of support through 2025 while "significantly increasing adaptation finance from current levels and to further provide appropriate technology and capacity-building support" (UNCC 2017, 1). In this way, SDG 13 and the 2030 Agenda have committed themselves to combat climate change and ensure a 'sustainable development' path by "help[ing] developing countries move toward a low-carbon economy" (UN 2017, 1). Yet, current climate disruption and the (un)sustainability of the planet is not about carbon, but about our interrelated global economic power system (Klein 2014) and economic thinking, stretched over histories of colonialism, industrialisations, and globalisations.

In this regard, Arturo Escobar (1995) has argued that the notion of 'development' has functioned discursively since post-World

War II as a regulated space that has ultimately provided the conditions for the possibility of knowledge and justification for political and economic intervention in postcolonial and non-western societies. In that sense, Eiman O. Zein-Elabdin and S. Charusheela (2004) maintain that

> Economics is epistemologically comfortable with the notion of colonialism and imperial domination […It] can thus be soundly characterized as a colonial discourse grounded in exclusion and erasure of the unfamiliar. (2-3)

It is, thereby, not surprising that 'development', as the companion of Economics, is seen to be closely associated with colonialism. 'Development' has organised what it means to be poor or wealthy, just or unjust, with or without 'development' (Kapoor 2008), and has classified, in this way, certain subjectivities and knowledges as ontologically and epistemologically inferior (Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004). In other words, 'development' is premised by the belief that some people of the world are 'developed' while others are 'underdeveloped/developing', making domination possible through a series of 'deficits' and a catalogue of 'needs'. In that sense, implementing 'sustainable development' projects and programmes in the so-called 'developing countries' embodies not only the institutional and financial power of its proponents (e.g.

the UN and its specialised agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, western donors, and the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa]), the upgrading of living standards, and the modernisation of the productive apparatus, but also the cultural weight and discursive authority of Economics. Thus, 'sustainable development' is framed in a single way of thinking the economy (i.e. capitalism and developmentalism), containing specific ideas, practices, and forms of knowledge as its essential components, since development "entails a learning process" (Zein-Elabdin 2003, 31).

In this vein, it is worth noting the similarities between the two main concepts welcomed in the Rio+20 conference: 'sustainable development' and the Anthropocene – a narrative that invokes a pan-human species responsible for the current climate crisis – and the parallels between the problems they pose and encounter. The Anthropocene and 'sustainable development' discourses agree about the dramatic planetary changes we are facing and both stories have surfaced together at the height and expansion of neoliberalism. Climate action, therefore, has been relegated to 'mitigation and adaptation' and capital has corrupted the autonomy, discourse, and activist charge of the mainstream environmental movement, turning it into an ally of private wealth.

In 'sustainable development' narratives, the Anthropocene has tended towards describing the current geologic age in which humans "have become the key structuring species that could determine, alone, the fate of Earth's life forms" (UN 2014, 1). In this way, 'sustainable development' normalises the story of human exceptionalism, modernist capitalism, and planetary decline, turning the Anthropocene into a view 'from nowhere'. This has led not to better stories imagining more liveable presents and more liveable futures. Instead, it often leads to more of the same Anthropos – i.e. 'man' as the supreme exception capable of fashioning his world and his own autonomous self. There is, however, a *specific type* of 'man' connected to a particular culture (i.e. the logocentric *homo economicus*) that is destroying the planet.

Activists from environmental justice, climate justice, and Indigenous organisations do not invoke the Anthropocene's rhetoric of humans as destroyers or masters of nature. Rather, these groups provide examples of socially and ecologically sustainable communities. Natureculture histories are not homogeneous and the story of the rise of modernity and climate crisis is rooted in social and economic injustice (Klein 2014) as much as in the exploitation of nonhuman nature (Haraway 2016; Shiva 2016) and in the histor(ies) of colonial violence and

appropriations.[27] While the Anthropocene portrayed in 'sustainable development' narratives helpfully poses the question of the nature/society dualism, those narratives cannot resolve this division since they accept the self-definition of 'sustainable development'– that is, as a marker abstracted from the web of life. Thus, the Anthropocene story in 'sustainable development' narratives is unlikely to guide us helpfully towards the sustainability of the planet. In this regard, I find the notion of Capitalocene (Haraway 2016; Moore 2016) useful here insofar as it better describes the modernist rhetoric of 'sustainable development' and suggests a new synthesis beyond the nature/society dualism and human exceptionalism. Capitalocene, thereby, is figured as a critical zone rather than one grand disarray that includes all of humanity. It is an argument about *thinking* the ecological crisis (Moore 2016) rather than an argument about geological history – although, of course, the two are related. Rethinking capitalism in the web of life, as suggested by Donna Haraway (2016) and Jason W. Moore (2016), locates the current crisis of climate and environmental change in our planet beyond human species-being and opens the possibility of the critical insights of those who have been 'left behind'.

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[27] I use natureculture here as a synthesis of nature and culture that recognises their inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed (see Haraway 2016 and 2014 or any of Haraway's work).

In this regard, Moore (2016) states that the "Capitalocene does not stand for capitalism as an economic and social system. […] Rather, the Capitalocene signifies capitalism as a way of organizing nature – as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology" (6). Hence, understanding development as a colonial discourse in the Capitalocene, exercising power through an articulation of racial or cultural difference, rather than as an analysis that begins with undifferentiated humanity and a culturally economic neutral path towards 'prosperity', becomes crucial to locate climate change and the transformation of the environment in the 21st century. In this sense, 'sustainable development' needs to be situated not merely in relation to fossil fuels, but within complex and interrelated processes of global-scale economic and political governance stretched over histories of enclosures, colonialisms, patriarchy, industrialisations, and globalisations.

III.   THE UNSUSTAINABLE 'SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT' FRAMEWORK

The mantra of 'development' that 'growth is good' has been repeated so many times it has begun to feel like common sense.

Once again, the 'new' 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development directs us towards endless growth. SDG 8, for example, aims at "promot[ing] sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (UN 2015, 3). So far, over the last 60 years under the 'growth is better' narratives, more natural resources have been raided by (some) humans than in all previous centuries together (Arns et al. 2015). Today, large-scale mining is penetrating ever deeper layers, intensive mono-culture agriculture is destroying the biodiversity of the planet, multinational land grabs are advancing to remote corners, genetic engineering crops have created an entirely new type of pollution, and the race is on for the division of the seabed and the resources in it (Shiva 2016; Klein 2014). This frantic rhythm of 'progress' has spurred images of crisis and doom while firing up the competitive rush for new frontiers. Who is benefiting from this single story of 'prosperity'?

There are plenty of non or degrowth options and stories to be told, all of which have been ignored and silenced by the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.[28] Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (2015) claims that

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[28] See, for example, D'Alisa, Demaria and Kiallis (2015) for several non and degrowth options and proposals existing today around the world.

[a]s they stand now, the SDGs are a step backwards from these achievements [global recognition of Indigenous Peoples rights]. […] Include us, so that we can protect our traditions and territories for our children and protect the planet's biodiversity for all the world's children. Don't leave us behind.

To date, Indigenous Peoples are still not included in the development agenda. Furthermore, Indigenous and community lands remain unprotected and vulnerable to extractivist economic activities – i.e. the intensive exploitation of natural resources from where the economy is organised in a dependent way – such as land grabbing from governments, corporations, and 'development' itself. In 2016, for example, approximately twice as many of such land deals were found to be 'in operation' around the world as in 2013, and up to 59 percent of these deals cover communal lands claimed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Yet, these settler 'development' projects are funded, promoted, and supported by 'development' agencies such as the World Bank (Carrasco-Miró 2018), which has played a pivotal role in funding land deals to the tune of more than $8 billion over the past decade (Oxfam 2012).

In what follows, I critically analyse the UN's 'sustainable development' multidimensional approach – composed of environmental, economic, and social dimensions – and propose elements of analysis and critique while exploring the 'value of the value' in 'the economic' to understand how value arises in contemporary social life. I argue that what is actually sustained in 'sustainable development' is the economic exploitation and appropriation of humans and nature, as well as an unsustainable industrial economic model. In order to highlight the already existing worldviews and platforms of life-enhancing political strategies, I provide examples of communities and projects that support sustainable liveable presents and futures throughout this section. This may help development economists and analysts to retrieve the plural economic valorisations people have about the environment and nature. It may also improve our understanding of contemporary economic endeavours in support of a more just and democratic transition towards renewable energy, local economies, and socially and ecologically sustainable communities and futures.

The Environmental Dimension: Nature as Capital

One of the key dimensions of the 'sustainable development' integrated framework is the environmental one, and it mainly refers to the natural capital approach (UNDP 2016). Natural capital refers to the environmental assets of a country, especially 'developing countries', and comprises natural resource stocks, land, and ecosystems (WB 2012). As the WB (2012) and UNDP (2016) state, accounting for natural capital leads to better economic decisions about development priorities and investments. Yet, the natural capital approach clearly resonates with a colonialist/extractivist economy. History tells us that extractivist economies have led to widespread poverty, increased inequality and inequity, promoted different kinds of violence to people and nature, caused recurrent economic crises, destroyed other economies and social networks, consolidated 'rent-seeking' mentalities, and seriously damaged the environment for future generations.

Natural capital stands for a new 'development' method of intervention in the environment, with nature reframed as "a specific type of capital, which needs to be measured, conserved, produced, and even accumulated" (Kenis and Lievens 2015, 8). In this approach, nature comes to stand for a collection of tradable ecosystem services and durable goods used in production as infrastructure or equipment or price that are "mobilized to defend

productivity gains, minimize costs of capital expansion, and stave off crises of reproduction" (Lohmann 2016, 4; see Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, WB, UNEP and UNDP 2016). Thus, in this approach, nature is objectified and its value is reduced to a unique economic value: price. Price generates the illusion that monetary measurements offer a good indicator of the value that derives from other scales to better decisions for sustainable development. Yet, economic estimation is one of multiple forms of evaluating nature. Not only does measuring nature minimise the different values of nature to technical instrumentalisation, it also removes any possibility of public dialogue about its valorisations. Different answers that people give about the importance of a natural area or nature – for its ecological richness, the beauty of its landscapes, cosmovisions, or sacred places – are reduced or removed in this dimension to the same scale of expression: price. In other words, in the 'sustainable development' framework, nature should be valued economically if we are to protect it globally.

If nature is measured in price, then the protection of the environment is, thereby, a form of investment. Thus, in this dimension, the biodiversity of ecosystems is not valuable because each form of life is an end-in-itself embedded in communities of mutual support, but is valued only as a source of 'ecosystem

services' for 'development' (see Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, WB, UNEP and UNDP 2016). In other words, ecological cycles, such as water or the regeneration of the soil, have become, in this environmental dimension, 'services' that can enter the market through 'sustainable development'. Here, the cultural values of efficiency and economic profit are imposed, and ecological, cultural, religious, sacred, or aesthetic values are 'left behind'. Yet, when the value of nature is approached, we advance to ethical and moral public discussions and assessments even if 'development' does not acknowledge it. Thus, when price is the only measure to allocate value without open discussions about the value and meaning of nature, this estimation is ethnocentric, anthropocentric, and capitalogenic.

As many ecologists and Indigenous People around the world have been saying for many years, human presence is neither necessary nor indispensable to maintain ecologic sustainability (Gudynas 2004; Haraway 2016; Shiva 2016). In other words, the ecologic dimension of sustainability is a property of ecosystems and not of human beings. Yet, by introducing nature to the market, 'sustainable development' disarticulates and removes the concept of nature and replaces it by capital, services, products, or resources. As argued by Moore, "the genius of capitalism […] has been to treat nature as 'free gift' […] to make the whole of nature

work on the cheap" (2016, 112). If ecosystems are (ab)used to the point of collapse, then all life in the planetary community is diminished (Klein 2014). To admit and embrace that ecocide entails an all-encompassing diminishment would already be a break with the current unsustainability of the 'sustainable development' approach. The process of assigning prices in the natural capital dimension is not innocent or neutral, but reflects a rationality based on aspects such as the maximisation of benefits, the utilitarian use of resources, and consumerism. Individual consumerism presents itself as a problem for sustainable development. Consumption is the end of the economic chain and 'sustainable development' supports this vision through consumerist campaigns in environmental issues (e.g. promoting recycled products), such as in the UN's *The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World* (UN 2017). But, can we shop to end environmental degradation? As argued by Ilan Kapoor (2008), consumerist campaigns are all ideological attempts to remove the dimension of capital from reality. In other words, they are a way to purify life and try to dispose of capital and its inherent perils and inconveniences.

According to the WB (2012) and UNDP (2012b), ecological or biodiversity management of nature needs technical management. Thus, they argue, development experts are the decision makers to

help demonstrate sound biodiversity management practices in the Global South and build capacity to sustain biodiversity practices and projects. It is assumed here that development experts offer the best possibilities in elaborating sustainable strategies in any given context, regardless of the knowledges and peoples that live, and have lived, in that context. Development experts, including and/or in partnership with mostly Northern-based environmental NGOs, are helping, for example, to identify new environmental areas for commodification in the Global South. For example, Northern NGOs such as

> Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, and the Jane Goodall Institute are feeding a substantial global demand for nature-related photographs, films, and commodities. They are, in fact, helping to transform Africa's natural capital (e.g. forests, wildlife, landscapes) into 'symbolic capital and money', thus 'incorporating nature and wildlife into a broader capitalist system' (Brockington and Scholfield 2010: 552; cf. Brockington 2009; Igoe 2010). […] Their growing presence in Africa has resulted in their ability to influence and lobby governments, not simply on conservation issues, but on broader policymaking related to wildlife and land management, environment and eco-

tourism (including hotel and resort real estate development). (Kapoor 2013, 107-108)

Broadly speaking, then, 'sustainable development' and its environmental dimension are preparing the ground for greater extractivist activities (see Carrasco-Miró 2018). However, this extractivist practice is not limited to nature. Natural capital is easily translated as cheap labour as a means of 'development', for example in the trillion dollar industry of tourism, where nature-based tourism is one of the main tourist practices, which, in turn, naturalises the inequality forced upon those living in the Global South, especially impoverished females and people of colour. Paradoxically, in this dimension, it is possible to lose natural capital as long as it is substituted for another capital associated (social or economic) with human capital to assure that 'quality of life' is not reduced (see UNDP 2016). Yet, the assumption that substitution is almost perfect between nature and human capital is a serious distortion of reality (Daly 1994). In fact, while human capital could bring financial resources to sustainable development projects/programmes such as agroforestry, it cannot help, for example, to accelerate the growth of trees. This purely capitalist imagination about sustainability as the idea of maintaining a stock of capital traps nature into the ecocide of the Capitalocene. Thus, sustainability in this dimension does not sustain the environment, nor does it sustain better futures for all.

One way to problematise the natural capital approach both discursively and with reference to its representational sovereignty over reality in 'sustainable development' is to question the so-called primacy of 'economic value' over political, cultural, symbolic, spiritual, and nonmaterial values. In the 'sustainable development' capitalogenic approach, there is no space to dispute what has value or what is understood as wealth. Natural capital is about competency rather than mutual support. Economic valorisation and the market could be important contributions to sustainable strategies but they are insufficient on their own. Hence, it is key to raise the all-important question of 'the value of the value' from multiple locations and sites of lived realities. When nature is considered a subject, hence independent from human assessment, it emerges as a plural category that can be evaluated by means of different indicators. This plurality of nature ends 'development' epistemicide and ecocide. Still, different approaches to nature are incommensurable (but not incompatible) due to the plurality of values in front of nature. Measurements to nature, thereby, will always be incomplete. In that sense, capital could be used as one of the indicators amongst many others, and its application is as such limited. To deliberate openly and publicly about these issues – instead of letting the

market decide for us – touches, unavoidably, on competing conceptions of what a life worth living is.

Many world visions and practices are currently extending community beyond human species, positioning nature as a subject of rights in its own terms. For example, in January 2013, on behalf of the rights of nature, a coalition formed by various Indigenous and rights advocacy organisations filed a lawsuit against the Ecuadorian state for violating the constitutional law. They allowed large-scale mining exploitation to enter the Cordillera del Condor, in western Amazonia – one of the world's most important biological refuges and currently under pressure due to the dramatic expansion of large-scale extraction activities. The Amazon people of Sarayaku won the trial and argued for the centrality of the 'Living Forest' in their community's cosmology, modes of being, and ecological survival (see Biemann and Tavares 2015). Although, in Indigenous cosmovisions, nature has never required such rights simply because it is part of a larger whole, intercultural dialogues about different valorisations of nature have led to more just and ethical agreements.

The Economic Dimension: Inclusive Green Economy

The economic dimension in 'sustainable development' refers to *inclusive green* economy or, used interchangeably, *inclusive green* growth. Inclusive green economy/growth's supposed priority to avoid environmental damage, as opposed to only economic growth, and its concern with poverty alleviation and the environment, as opposed to more strictly defined 'material' needs, is usually seen as an improvement upon modernisation. But, I would like to point out that, although in a more warmly persuasive fashion, inclusive green economy/growth's cultural underpinnings are at least equally as problematic as in the solo economic growth approach. In support, I offer the following argument: 'Inclusive' and 'green' are fulsomely positive adjectives, which promise an entirely different way of doing business. Where 'sustainable' rings rather grey and managerial, 'green' is glowing; where 'development' is restricted to the 'developing countries' and can seem intangible and subjective, 'growth' or 'economy' is global in scope and sounds solid. This entails a series of technological, techncial, and behavioural changes, in particular to build principles and parameters of 'sustainability' and 'inclusion' into production, consumption, and trade, while maintaining high rates of economic growth as the key driver of 'development'.

To start, it is important to probe both of the inclusive green economy/growth's key terms – 'green' and 'inclusive'. The 'green' in this approach is based on the premise that, if a value for nature's goods and services can be set, this would provide enough motivation for the private sector to shift to cleaner energy sources, pollute less, and, basically, start investing in green technologies and business models. In doing so, the approach identifies a use-value for nature, which is a product of human labour as well as the satisfaction of a human need, along with an exchange value that comes from selling an environmentally conscious commodity or service. Here, environmental degradation and climate disruption not only pave the way for the privatisation of public assets and common pool resources, but also offer entirely new market opportunities. That is to say, on the one hand, "in our age of global ecological crisis", capitalism profits from the "destruction of the planet" (Foster et al. 2010, 71-72); on the other, the "growth of natural scarcity is seen as a golden opportunity in which to further privatize the world's commons" (Foster et al. 2010, 70) and accumulate capital.

Why is growth the only answer to sustainability and well-being? It has become clear that the now less fashionable green capitalism/growth – including 'development' initiatives such as carbon taxes, dematerialising the economy, cap-and-trade

schemes, debt-for-nature swaps, industrial agriculture, market-based green design, hybrid cars, and biogas – has completely failed (Haraway 2016; Klein 2014; Kari-Oca Declaration 2 2012). With increased devastation to land and water, collapse in our food and agricultural systems, and uncontrolled growth in greenhouse gases, green capitalism has only brought us closer to an irreversible ecocatastrophe (Shiva 2016; Klein 2014). Paradoxically, while this ecological destruction and disruption of nature is justified in terms of that 'economic growth is relevant for feeding people', the problem of hunger has grown (Shiva 2016). However, inclusive green growth approaches insist that environmental sustainability is reliant upon the market system and the advancement of the new technologies of geoengineering and nuclear renewal energy (see UN 2015). In this economic dimension, development's hope for the planet lies with an eco-industrial revolution sparked by technological innovation and directed by the signals of the market as the 'new' magic elixir for continuous growth. Technology can undoubtedly help in some cases to reduce inequalities, but there are already many studies and reports that confirm that we cannot trust that technology will maintain the current highly consumptive system in a time of natural resource exhaustion (Klein 2007, 2014). Enchanting growth with 'green', 'sustainable development' bypasses, once again, the historical, economic, and imperial legacies of 'development' that create categories of objects and people as

needed, desired, valuable, or disposable, removing the possibility of recognising the racialised and gendered platform of the Capitalocene. In other words, 'development' techno-utopia masks the chronic problems of our time and hides the culprits who are responsible for gaming the system in their favour.

The 'inclusive' side in the green economy/growth dimension refers to all segments of the population to contribute to and benefit from economic growth in an environmental sustainable manner. As stated by the WB (2012), the inclusive side of inclusive green growth aims to

> operationalize sustainable development by reconciling developing countries' urgent need for rapid growth and poverty alleviation with the need to avoid irreversible and costly environmental damage. As such, efforts to foster inclusive-green growth must focus on what is required in the next five to 10 years to sustain robust growth, while avoiding locking economies into unsustainable patterns, preventing irreversible environmental damage, and reducing the potential for regret. (2)

Here, it is the paternalistic and orientalist belief that 'developing countries' cannot have good environmental management because

they are 'poor', so 'development' organisations and 'experts' will come to 'fix it'. Further, it is assumed that there is a positive relationship between economic growth and environmental quality and that some economic wealth is indispensable for environmental management and knowledge. Yet, Indigenous Peoples, social movements, environmentalists, ecofeminists, and feminist economists, along with many existing studies and reports, including UN reports (see Shiva 2016; Klein 2014; Kari-Oca 2 Declaration 2012; Gudynas 2004), have demonstrated that, when the income per capita increases, some environmental impacts also increase, such as solid waste, emissions of CO_2 in the atmosphere, or the accumulation of very toxic substances such as cadmium or nickel. In other words, with more economic growth comes a long-term deterioration of the environment.

The universal 'we' and 'us' embodied in the 'sustainable development' discourse obscure the extensive scholarship on diverse human histories and resilient naturecultures (Haraway 2016, 2014) that are imagining and producing innovative approaches to climate mitigation, adaptation, and 'sustainable development'. Sustainability does not necessarily imply having direct property over natural resources, but demands an adequate ecological and social regulation of its management. It neither requires a state, a collective, 'development' 'experts', or market

property over nature, as natural capital and inclusive green growth dimensions claim, but imposes conditions of responsible use over the environment. Gudyanas (2004) explains that this approximation is similar to, for example, some Andean approaches where there is no private property over the land, but where it is the community that adjudicates certain rights of use.

The Social Dimension: Poverty Eradication

The social dimension in the 'sustainable development' framework refers to poverty eradication. According to this approach, we need economic growth, even if it is at the expense of irreversible ecological catastrophe, in order to cope with inequality and poverty. Yet, with the economic growth acquired until now, which was fiercely promoted within the previous global 'development' agenda, the UN Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), we should have made some significant progress towards poverty eradication. Instead, in most societies, inequality grows alongside their growing economies (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis 2015; Klein 2014). Thus, the current dominant development narrative that 'things are getting better', and that, if we keep doing things the way we have been and the global economy keeps growing, we can end global poverty by

2030, must be challenged. Instead, it is key to claim the fact that poverty has been created by hundreds of years of history and inequality, perpetuated by colonialism, capitalism, slavery, racism, and resource theft.

In this regard, 'development' has failed to discern its own complicity in the very 'poverty' and pollution they seek to eradicate. In fact, 'sustainable development' often rationalises the latter, making business itself the solution to poverty eradication or environmentalism (see Kapoor 2013, 2008). By so doing, 'development' masks and purifies corporate ills, acting as a countermeasure to socioeconomic and nature exploitation. Powerful economic groups not only consume more natural resources but they can also buy better quality environmental conditions. These groups live in cleaner neighbourhoods or countries away from pollution and consume food of higher quality. As Naomi Klein (2007) points out, with environmental harms and changes in climate adversely affecting the poor,

> we face a collective future of disaster apartheid in which
> survival is determined by who can afford to pay for
> escape. Perhaps part of the reason why so many of our
> elites, both political and corporate, are so sanguine about

climate change is that they are confident they will be able to buy their way out of the worst of it. (530)

The SDGs do discuss reducing inequality. However, their prescription is technocratic, obscure, and wholly incommensurate with the sustainability of life. In an Open Letter to the UN regarding the SDGs, several thinkers, artists, activist, peasants, workers, students, and spiritualists – called The Rules Community – signed and argued that

> [t]he SDGs claim they can eradicate poverty in all its forms by 2030. But they rely primarily on global economic growth to achieve this tremendous task. If such growth resembles that seen in recent decades, it will take 100 years for poverty to disappear, not the 15 years the SDGs promise. And even if this were possible in a shorter timescale, we would need to increase the size of the global economy by a factor of 12, which, in addition to making our planet uninhabitable, will obliterate any gains against poverty. (The Rules Community 2015, 1)

Take, for example, target 10.1 of the SDG 10, "Reduce inequality within and among countries", which states that, by 2030, "[the 2030 Agenda will] progressively achieve and sustain income

growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average" (UNDP 2015, 25). As already argued by The Rules Community, this commitment allows inequality to grow without limit until 2029, as long as it then begins to be reduced. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda thus fail to endorse the only means that can achieve their stated goal of eradicating poverty. In effect, by not tackling the roots of impoverishment, 'sustainable development' promotes imperial and environmental racism and perpetuates severe poverty, leaving this fundamental problem to future generations. If 'sustainable development' is really preoccupied with poverty, the first question that should be posed is: How is poverty created? Then a different story will be told.

Drawing upon feminist, Indigenous, artistic, and critical environmentalist knowledge politics, I suggest to think the economy under ecoSImies of care in the next section. EcoSImies of care go beyond moral disposition and reflect upon the question of 'the value of the value' in the economy. By understanding sustainability beyond the automatically assumed 'sustainable development' approach, ecoSImies of care may open a different space to taking the sustainability of life seriously.

IV.   ECOSIMIES OF CARE

> It matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts.
>
> Donna Haraway (2016)

Despite the recent ascendency of the 'sustainable development' story, communities, peoples, and social movements around the world are co-producing new narrative, political and art tools for mobilising, organising, and "dancing a new world into being" (Klein 2013, 1). Creating generative, receptive politics and coalitions means casting our lives with some and not others. As the planet heats up and as intra-human and interspecies divergences speed up, we need worlds that world worlds, to "make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures" (Haraway 2016, 57). As Donna Haraway (2016) has argued, it matters what thoughts, knowledge, or stories are marshalled to theorise and transform a profoundly damaged world. Words matter in producing particular kinds of politics and new economic imaginaries. In this context, I propose ecoSImies of care to question the 'economic man' as the basic unit of analysis and force the epistemological and ontological pluralisation of economies.

I owe the ecoSImy/ies term in its Spanish version (ecoSimia/as) to Miguel Guaira Calapy, a Cotacachi Indigenous leader (Ecuador) who suggested 'ecoSimias' as a term, an analytical category, and a potential tool to imagine and think subaltern knowledges (Gudynas 2004). Its meaning is related to a popular etymology that assumes ecoNOmy as the negation of what is mine and/or what is ours, making clear that not just capitalism but all ecoNOmy is a way of accumulation by dispossession. In this sense, ecoSImies are about processes of (re)appropriation from the Global South – as well as many and significant vital exchanges through multiple forms of cooperation that are situated and contextual – that uses dialogue through difference, singularity, and heterogeneity (Gudynas 2004). Formulating ecoSImies as ecoSImies of care may help to grapple with the question of sustainability. EcoSImies of care open a communitarian dimension of autonomy and collective self-organisation that expands the alternatives for thinking about the politics of care. It shows the radical affirmation that we, all humans, are already interdependent and ecodependent, and situates 'taking care of life' at the very centre of the economy and Economics. This means we need to take care of life together, since life is always life in common and we already inhabit a living environment.

By taking seriously this radical affirmation of our lives, economy and Economics only makes sense from the sustainability of life (i.e. taking care of our vulnerabilities, managing inter-eco-dependence, inhabiting a living surrounding, and understanding land as a place where beings live in a respectful way), which is in direct antagonism with the capitalogenic 'sustainable development' ideal where life is under attack (ecoNOmy). Here, I find the notion of '*cuidadanía*' – a pun created by the Spanish feminist collective *Precarias a la Deriva* on the Spanish words 'ciudadanía' (citizenship) and 'cuidados' (cares) – inspiring. 'Cuidadanía' is a new form of recognising ourselves as subjects that place care and nonhuman and human desires-needs-wants at the centre of our societies and communities as opposed to the notion of citizenship that centre the needs of capitalist markets.

There are several things, however, that ecoSImies of care do not mean. First, they do not refer to ideological, gender, ethnic, or racial plurality; nor does it refer to the incorporation or inclusion of marked differences into a multiculturally 'better' Economics. Second, they are not an issue of reporting differences amongst contexts (i.e. 'case studies') that present people facing similar 'economic' situations and behaving more or less the same – thus,

confirming already defined (western) universals and 'development' as the only game in town. Third, ecoSImies of care do not mean Indigenous. They are about the sustainability of life, knowing that, in each notion of ecoSImy, there is a notion of well-being. As such, the ecoSImies of care proposal aims at transforming the concept from one that conceives Economics/'development' as power disputes within a singular world (ecoNOmies) to another one that includes the possibility of adversarial relations amongst worlds (ecoSImies of care). In that sense, ecoSImies of care is the reconfiguration of the political as a decolonial reaction to the violence of the expansionist, universalist logic of capitalist development. EcoSImies of care are, therefore, about the re-existence and resistance of currently devalued and silenced economies by 'development'. As such, ecoSImies of care aim to account for economic difference affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devaluated Global South – that is, diverse modes of social organisation with diverse forms of subjectification that enunciate fundamentally different, yet always entangled, worlds.

In ecoSImies of care, sustainability does not equal slowness and durability; it tells the story of how everything we do around the world is interconnected here and now. For example, how the western lifestyle, known to have an effect on climate disruption

(see Klein 2014), also has an impact on herdsmen in the Sahel (see Biemann 2013). A way of thinking about sustainability through ecoSImies of care, then, is to generate images that do not exhaust the possibilities of others by fixing them in a place when their potential for a fuller life is likely to be realised in a distant country. Thus, ecoSImies of care question the very meaning of wealth: What has value in this common place where we all live and die? Situated notions of value and a live worth living, such as *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador, *Suma Qamaña* in Bolivia, *Ubuntu* in South Africa, or *Vida Digna* in Spain, are epistemologies capable of inspiring another way of being and being in the world, contributing to the global debate about environmental sustainability and the climate crisis. In this framework, ecoSImies of care are less of a critical tool than an attitude reflecting contemporary awareness of how we live our lives and how to die well. Drawing on feminism, ecoSImies of care are at once a critique of the force of the 'economic man', contesting everything that seems self-evident, unified, present, and inescapable in what counts as human, while also being the imagination of something that would no longer be 'man' as such but neither some pure feminine outside (for the pure feminine was always part of the logic of man). As follows, I suggest three workable emancipatory criteria of ecoSImies of care: a biocentric approach, uncertainty, and commitment to facilitate sustainability action and behaviours in contemporary economies.

Biocentric Approach

A biocentric approach recognises that life shall prevail over production or trading relations and reproduction of goods at the cost of the regeneration of life. Under this criterion, for example, economic strategies that exploit the generative powers of women, people of colour, Indigenous Peoples, animals, plants, genes, and cells, or support countries in exporting food when that same country suffers from malnutrition, are enacting violence. Thinking ecoSImies of care under this principle helps us to shift away from the singular goal of material affluence that rejects and attacks life and allows us to decentre capitalist markets to enunciate the diverse existing ecoSImies (beyond markets, the state, and households) that sustain life and, therefore, possible futures.

Uncertainty

Economics and 'development' have been trying to control and remove uncertainty through equilibrium formulations for coordinating atomistic agent behaviour. Yet, we live in a world marked by the fundamental unknowability of the future.

Uncertainty is intrinsic to the environment and human beings, and thus to the economy. Environmental systems and humans have non-linear relations and they are not necessarily in equilibrium. They are uncertain and can be chaotic and messy. Still, uncertainty should not be a negative aspect that prevents 'objectivity'. Uncertainty is an inaudible attribute and, for this reason, pushes us to go in-depth into public discussions and intercultural dialogues about multiple estimations, values, and perceptions.

Commitment

'Development' helps to produce a generous and benevolent national community or western identity, building unity and pride. Yet, "benevolent first-world appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other" (Spivak 1988) does not want to encounter the Global South in its own terms but for other, usually global, Northern purposes. That said, how to live together in a way that living is worthy and just for all? I suggest here, first of all, commitment. To further understand the nature of commitment I may use Amartya Sen's (1977) interesting distinction between sympathy and commitment. If I am disturbed by the idea of others being poor, following Sen's argument, this is a case of sympathy. If, on the other hand, this idea does not make me personally

uncomfortable or distressed, but still makes me think there is something deeply wrong with it, it is a case of commitment. Following this definition, commitment is not primarily or chiefly motivated by individualised sentiments of, for example, development's narrative of 'how to feel good about poverty'.[29] In other words, commitment does not radiate from the individualised emotional self and does not aim at satisfying ongoing emotional aspirations of development's 'feeling good' agendas and goals. Instead, commitment is the willingness to let ourselves be committed, to be put in a commitment for an unforeseen problem that challenges us. As such, commitment is not resolved in a declaration of intentions or set of goals but it sets in motion a difficult process. This means being involved in a situation, a dialogue, that exceeds us and that demands, finally, to take a position. Taking a position is not just taking sides (for or against) or making a judgement (I like, I do not like). It is to have to invent an answer that we do not have and that, whatever it is, will not leave us the same.

V.   FINAL REMARKS

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[29] "How to Feel Good about Poverty Campaign." Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JpqCvAalag. Accessed May 31, 2018.

According to the tenets of the current dominant sustainable development discourse and project, nature should be valued economically if we are to protect the planet globally. Yet, why is this economic estimation the only option? This article has considered the global development 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and has analysed its current 'sustainable development' discourse and its key dimensions: environmental (natural capital), economic (inclusive green economy), and social (poverty eradication). I have argued that 'sustainable development' haunts a totalising modernity story with capitalism as its universal telos, and that it hinders the possibility of accessing the critical insights of those who have been 'left behind', colonised, or bulldozed over in the Capitalocene.

At the same time, there is an urgent need to think what a life worth living is and how to live and die well as mortal critters, in a moment when the edges of the human are in question under the Capitalocene. The UN, jointly with other 'development' actors, claim that the global 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development offers "hope in a world beset by crisis" (UN News Centre 2016). Yet, if 'sustainable development' solely attempts to 'culturalise' the 'development' discourse regarding the physical and chemical transformations our planet is undergoing, it fails to address a

deeper problem and contributes, in this way, to modernity's permanent war on the biosphere. Rather than looking hopefully to a day when these tensions are resolved either in a posthuman final moment or the technological triumph of human survival, I reject hope as a political strategy. Relying upon hope would be to resurrect the presumption that 'economic man' is the fundamental unit that is thinkable, which, as Haraway's states, makes doing good work impossible. In this context, I propose ecoSImies of care to question the 'value of the value' in the economy and Economics and as a commitment (instead of hope) for the re-existence and resistance of currently devalued economies in 'development'. In this sense, ecoSImies of care is an effort to continue building an economically just world, made of equitable and ethical future social organisations in light of 21st-century crises.

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ARTICLE 3

DECOLONIZING FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS:

Expanding the economic canon and searching for alternate frameworks[30] [31]

Abstract

This article urges attention to the project of decolonizing feminist development economics as a way to re-imagine feminist politics. Drawing on decolonization projects—their struggles and insights—this article exposes modernist assumptions within development discourse and their contemporary colonial forms, and expands the notion of economy and female empowerment beyond the scope of capitalist modernity. Further to this, and using the experience of working as a feminist economist in an international development organization in Guatemala, this article discusses economic patterns within contemporary Mesoamerica and the feminist dilemmas in development that complicate current approaches to women's economic empowerment. It highlights the centrality of the sustainability of life, communitarian self-determination, and complementarity as the main motifs of Mayan economic relations and female emancipation. This exploration allows us to critically re-examine binary categories and to account for economic difference—the diverse modes of social organization with particular forms of subjectification that enunciate fundamentally different, yet always entangled worlds.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Mainstream discourse and institutional practices of development (hereinafter, referred to as development) have become the leading narrative of our time, defining what it means to be poor or wealthy, just or unjust, with or without development (Kapoor 2008). It must be noted that economics, itself dominated by its neoclassical variant, has long been seen as a hegemonic discipline within the field of development (Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004).[32] Development has become the sub-narrative that governs the analyses of non-Western societies and people across different schools of economics, with feminist economists focusing on women in the "developing/less developed" world and drawing attention to the gender bias within development policies. Feminist economists have exposed gender as the social metaphor that

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[32] The neoclassical variant refers to the choice game-theoretical model, which is based on the premise that aggregate social behavior results from the behavior of individual actors, each of whom is making their individual decisions. According to this model, "rational" decisions culminate in the supremacy of the "market" as a medium for resource allocation.

denies much of economic development theory (see Elson 1995). They have interrogated neoclassical economics as a hegemonic discourse and pushed for a non-androcentric economics and development practice (see Grapard and Hewiston 2011). This has been a tremendous contribution, especially as it is neither an insignificant nor easily won gain. Yet feminist economists' intense focus on women's economic subordination and empowerment in the non-West, along with their modernist bias (Barker 2000; Wood 2003; Zein-Elabdin 2016; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004), has left largely untouched the underlying hegemonic discourse of development.[33]

In this article, to counter their erasure from contemporary development narratives, I aim to both expose the cultural "rootedness" of development, and draw attention to existing alternatives to capitalism and counter-discourses from the Global South. Drawing on my personal experience of working as a feminist economist in an international development organization

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[33] Modernism refers here as the social vision that includes a liberal-democratic nation state, an industrial capitalist economy, an urban agglomeration, and a series of other specific institutions of public life and "civil society," requiring a particular mode of interaction between individuals, the individual and the state, and the individual and society (Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004).

in Guatemala, this article examines Mesoamerican economic patterns, social ethics, and feminist dilemmas in the field of development that defy binary categories and exceed the current women's economic empowerment framework. Building on this, I urge that further attention is paid to the project of decolonizing feminist development economics in order to imagine a broader canon of thought beyond a simply modernist one. By doing so, I explore political strategies with the power to valorize non-modernist and non-capitalist economic conceptions of female empowerment and economic well-being, such as deep reciprocity, the sustainability of life, and communitarian self-determination—all of which are currently undervalued in contemporary contexts of development. Decolonizing feminist economics in this way may allow non-Western and non-capitalist economies (currently labeled as "less developed" or "developing") equal participation in what Zein-Elabdin (2009) terms "the global construction of social meaning and economic wellbeing" (1153). In this sense, the work of feminist decolonial thinking involves an unveiling of the epistemic silences within Western epistemology and the affirmation of the epistemic rights of the devalued Global South and non-Western economies.

To present my analysis and proposal, in the next section, I first explore the ontological separation of culture and economy, arguing that economies, as well as notions of development, are culturally embedded. Further, I suggest a decolonizing shift within feminist development economics. Proceeding, I question modernist assumptions regarding women's economic empowerment and its universal economic prescriptions, and expose two distinct contemporary colonial forms of development. I highlight economic patterns from Mayan communities—currently devalued under modernist notions of development—that indicate the centrality of the sustainability of life and communitarian self-determination as the main motifs of economic relations and female emancipation in contemporary Mesoamerica. Using my experience as a feminist economist working in the development sector, I discuss gender equality and the complementarity dilemma. Finally, I propose a decolonized feminist economics as a politics of articulation that both accounts for economic difference and is able to build communal politics.

II.   (UN)IMAGINING FUTURES

Development is a foundational concept of economics—and stands both in its own right, and in a wider sense, as part of the project of Western modernity. Under the broad notion of economy, development served as a field for confirming the universality of an economic rationality and modernity that was modelled after the pattern of individual settler behavior as in the logo-centric *homo economicus* Robinson Crusoe—the economic man. Over the last two centuries, mainstream economists have portrayed Crusoe as the benign representative of economic agency and the story is associated with the expansion of capitalist markets in North America and Europe, as well as the "discovery" of land(s) "out there." In this imaginary paradigm, capitalism is naively constructed as a universal telos for development, and economists presented the economic growth experienced in North America and Europe as an inevitable natural phenomenon—one that was universally exportable. Non-Western contexts thereby become specimens of failed capitalism and constituted as a set of problems that range from outright poverty and inappropriate value systems to unproductive lands. Within this framework, capitalist economic growth becomes both the unquestioned norm and the goal to emulate that "appears" in places without history or society with "unused" or "unoccupied" lands—an exemplary Robinson Crusoe fiction.

A fiction it most certainly is. Development economists remove Crusoe from the world of violence, power, oppression, domination, and exploitation and place him in a social void instead—in a world without women, history, environment, or eco-socio-cultural relationships. Economic exploitation and appropriation within narratives of development are thus effectively masked by the rhetoric of contractual exchange, cultural neutrality, and scientific knowledge, while the socially constructed Western-white-heterosexual-male individual is presented as the human norm. These concerns have been aptly addressed by feminist economists in order to dismantle neoclassical economics and its approach to development (see Grapard and Hewitson 2011). In many ways, it can be argued that feminist development economists have indeed interrogated Crusoe's monocultural, androcentric, and economic imaginary, pushing instead for a non-androcentric economics and development policy. However, there is a need to push further.

Understanding how "other" cultures encounter "the West" has acquired increasing political urgency in the last decade. Yet, development-oriented and politico-economic approaches such as feminist economics have been relatively slow in engaging with

critical theories regarding cultural hegemony and the condition of post/decoloniality (Kapoor 2008; Pollard, McEwan and Hughes 2011; Zein-Elabdin 2016; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004). One of the main reasons may be that within the field of economics culture has been generally dismissed as a negative or neutral factor. Zein-Elabdin (2004) claims that this "disembodiment from culture" (28) has caused a process of double erasure in economics—the erasure of certain cultures and economies by theorizing them as inferior (less developed/developing) on the one hand, and the erasure of the work of cultural hegemony, thereby privileging the historical context of European modernity in different world regions, on the other. Such modernism in economics has manifested itself most forcefully in development circles where the domain of culture is often treated as an obstacle (as customs), an isolable realm of meaning (as tastes and preferences), or a "driving forth" towards economic growth (the cultivation of entrepreneurialism), but never valued for its own sake (the culture *of* development; Kapoor 2008). Yet economies and their theorization are always intertwined with, and shaped by, social and cultural meanings that contain different everyday practices, ideas, and world views (Pollard, McEwan and Hughes, 2011). In this sense economies, as well as development policies, are always cultural artifacts.

It would be inaccurate to claim that feminist economists have overlooked questions of culture in their analyses and policy formulations. Feminist economists have contributed tremendously to foregrounding the role of culture in economics—not least by rejecting the Cartesian dualism of mind/body and making visible dominant development models (see Elson 1995; Fukuda-Parr, Heintz and Seguino 2015). However, as the work of Barker (2000), Charusheela (2003), Gibson-Graham (2006), Wood (2003), and Zein-Elabdin (2004, 2016) demonstrates, whilst feminist economists have performed cultural analyses, these have only taken place "in a partial manner" (Zein-Elabdin 2016, 9)—a partiality most clearly reflected in the feminist economics approach to development and the question of "women-from-the-Global-South" (Spivak 1999). Although, as feminist economists have rightly pointed out, capitalism has an intrinsic androcentric bias, capitalism is also equally constituted by the logic of colonialism. In this sense, it is not *just* capitalism, but also the way that capitalist growth processes have developed in North America and Europe that is assumed to be the universal model of development—one equally transportable to present day Guatemala as it is to, for example, Mozambique. Unfortunately, despite advances in the field of gender and development and some stellar efforts by postcolonial feminist economists, I agree with Barker (2000), Bergeron (2004), Spivak (1999), Zein-Elabdin

(2016), and Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela (2004) that so far much of feminist development economics analyses remain intransigently modernist.[34]

Development plays a pivotal role in the relationship between Western and non-Western feminisms, connecting, for example, the diverse feminist locations, generations and experiences. In this regard, postcolonial feminists have contributed enormously to decentering "the West." They have pointed out that much of development theory is predicated on the assumption of a homogeneous "women-from-the-Global-South" that is "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized" and privileges the self-representation of "Western-women" as "educated, modern, having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions" (Mohanty 1991, 337). Postcolonial theory offers profound critiques of cultural hegemony and domination, as well as their roots in colonial history—and the way in which both persist in various guises to the present day. Yet postcolonial

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[34] For an analysis of feminist debates and contributions in the gender and development field, see Harcourt (2016). Some examples of postcolonial feminist economists are Bergeron (2004), Gibson-Graham (2006), Wood (2003), Zein-Elabdin (2009, 2016), and Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela (2004).

scholarship tends to underappreciate the economic dimensions of development, as we can see from the relative lack of engagement with issues such as poverty, wealth creation, and land/water/air/oceans/subterranean earth (hereinafter referred to as "land"). Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela (2004) argue that

> theorizing the economy continues to be a point of weakness in much postcolonial scholarship. . . . Although postcolonial critics often invoke economic forces in their analyses, the theory they draw on is often ill defined, gestural and removed from current scholarship in Economics. (Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004, 4–5)

Thus, the creativity in the area of cultural analysis that postcolonial scholarship demonstrates has still not permeated the treatment of "the economic."[35]

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[35] In recent years, there have been important efforts to provide a space for nascent debates about postcolonialism and the treatment of "the economic" (see Pollard, McEwan and Hughes 2011; Zein-Elabdin 2016).

This article seeks to challenge the ontological separation of culture, development, and economy, and thus to move away from a super-structural notion of culture (as others have done, e.g. Kapoor 2008; Zein-Elabdin 2016) to not only expose the cultural rootedness of development, but also explore economic patterns from Mayan communities that indicate the centrality of the sustainability of life, collective self-determination, and complementarity as the main motifs of economic relations and emancipation in contemporary Mesoamerica. Although limitations of space do not allow me to examine these patterns in great depth, my analysis will be sufficient to illustrate how they interrogate the model of women's economic empowerment as claimed in the current development framework. The fact that female economic empowerment in Indigenous epistemologies is based neither on the individual's autonomy to make choices, nor gender equality—claims that have been made most forcefully within feminist economics—suggests the need for a broader, decolonizing feminist development economics. In this sense, the significance of exploring economic structures lies, not simply in making gestures (i.e. giving "space" to non-Western economies), but also in helping to analyse wider and currently insufficiently understood phenomena. This demands the need to understand the specific and situated dynamics of "the economic" on its own terms, rather than calling for the replacement of its cultural basis (Zein-Elabdin 2009). In order to locate specifically Mayan

economic patterns, it will first be necessary to establish what is required to decolonize feminist development economics—a task to which I now turn.

III.　DECOLONIZING FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

Given the centrality of economics in development, and progress on "mainstreaming" gender equality issues since the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women (1975–1985), it is not surprising that feminist economics and its objects of study have gained such relevance. Today, women's economic empowerment is "at the heart of the 2030 [global development] Agenda" (UN 2017, 1; see also UN 2015) and is extolled as "a uniquely potent way for women to have greater choice and exert control over their own lives" (UN 2016, 1). Feminist economists have joined, amongst others, the UN in acknowledging women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (UN WOMEN, 2017) as a priority for current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are now panel members of the first-ever High-Level

Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (HLP-WEE).[36] In both the 2030 Agenda (UN 2015) and the UN HLP-WEE reports (UN 2017), women's economic empowerment and the "closing [of] gender gaps" (UN 2017, 3) are heralded as direct paths towards gender equality, the eradication of poverty, and economic growth worldwide. These initiatives also highlight that "challenging harmful social norms that constrain women in traditional roles" (UN 2017, 5) is the key action towards effectively transforming women's economic empowerment.

Modernist ideologues assume that women's problems in non-Western contexts lie elsewhere—e.g. in non-modern/"traditional" cultures—and never in the actual economic structures or politics of institutionalization itself (Charusheela 2003). Feminist economists have challenged the simplistic development claim that economic growth will lead to women's empowerment, and have questioned contemporary neoliberal empowerment policies.

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[36] The panel is comprised of influential leaders from the field of development, such as the directors of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UN Women, the International Labour Organization, Oxfam International, and CEOs from the private sector, as well as renowned feminist economists such as the ex-president of the International Association of Feminist Economics (IAFFE) and IAFFE's previous associate editor.

However, paying close attention to the normalization of power, the invocation of modernist assumptions, and the capitalist developments that characterize women's economic empowerment development policies, demonstrates feminist economists' embeddedness within colonialist development assumptions. Thus, I propose a decolonization of feminist development economics.

A decolonizing shift in feminist development economics becomes a task and a process of liberation from assumed principles of knowledge and understandings of how the economy, politics and conceptions of human and non/more-than-human subjects are and "should" be. Decolonizing feminist economics means exposing the cultural rootedness of development and involves acknowledging that decolonization will need both a change in the order of the world (Fanon 1963) and create possibilities of re-existence, resistance, and the validation of economies born out of the struggle against the systematic injustices caused by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Decolonizing development thus becomes an important political project to feminist economics that seek to disrupt and contest the hegemony of Western economical theorizing and capitalist development.

When discussing of the future of feminism, several authors (e.g. Rivera 2010; Spivak 1999) have claimed that decolonizing efforts should be based at the epistemological level. Butler (2004 as cited in Marcos 2009), for example, "recommends a 'privileging of epistemology' as an urgent next step in our [feminist] commitments. She also reminds us that there is no 'register for audibility', referring to the difficulties of reaching out, understanding and respecting 'Other' subaltern epistemic worlds" (118; see also Wood 2003). In academic circles, the group known as Decolonial Option, led by a collective of Latin American and Caribbean scholars, has developed a body of literature that attempts to provide "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2011, 45) from Western modernity. While I am aware of the group's scholarship and acknowledge some of their meaningful insights regarding, for example, the coloniality of gender (Lugones 2008) and their critique of colonialism and capitalist development from a Latin American perspective (Escobar 1995), I find the Decolonial Option group deeply problematic.[37]

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[37] While included in many of the group's publications and given public lip service, few theorists from the Decolonial Option group incorporate Lugones' (2008) "coloniality of gender" into their approach. For further discussion on this matter, see Mendoza (2016) and Rivera (2010).

In this regard, I share critiques made by feminist Indigenous, queer Indigenous, afro-descendant feminists, and feminist non-Indigenous thinkers that the Decolonial Option group does not recognize feminist theory (despite being "inspired" by it) and does not pay sufficient attention to genders and sexualities (Mendoza 2016), as well as silencing those various voices who have long been working on issues of decolonization (Rivera 2010).[38] Thus, I agree that the Decolonial Option group in reality represents a colonizing discourse originating in North American universities, dominated by white heterosexual males (Curiel 2007; Mendoza 2016) and divorced from the local struggles of Indigenous peoples—the very struggles with which they are supposed to be in dialogue (Rivera 2010). Further, by using a world of references and counter-references, the Decolonial Option group has used citation as a reproductive technology of power to promote and reinforce themselves, thereby reifying unethical hierarchies of knowledge production. Within feminist circles, decolonial theory has entered into dialogue with intersectional, poststructuralist, Indigenous, afro-descendant, Indian, African, Chicana, and mestiza feminists, who have each developed their own decolonizing theories and practices before and/or independently of the Decolonial Option group.

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[38] In this article, I use the generalized political collectivity "Indigenous."

In this context, I position myself and this text within the decolonization project as a political, anti-colonial, and affirmative practice, aligned with projects and theoretical approaches that challenge and contest hegemonic modernist ways of knowing, being, and seeing the world. Decolonization is neither a metaphor, "nor a metonym for social justice" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 21). Decolonization does not mean Indigenous. It is about actively recognizing, centering, validating, and honoring non-Western rights, non-modernist values, epistemologies, cosmologies, knowledges, lifestyles, and stories. Thus, decoloniz*ing* (a gerund, as such containing the power of incompleteness) is a project that recognizes "fundamental difference" in worldviews without assigning rank or evolutionary potential. I believe decolonization opens up possibilities for a feminist development economics that resists the systematic injustices caused by modernist capitalism, and that, at the same time, takes seriously the possibility of alternatives for a "better" world. The idea underlying "alternatives for a 'better' world" is that a critical theory, such as feminism, "is premised upon the idea that there is no way of knowing the world better than by anticipating a better world" (Santos 2014, viii)—that is, to use our imagination. This anticipation "provides us both the intellectual instruments" with

which to dismantle the narratives of capitalist modernity and development universalist self-imagination "that sustain and legitimate social and economic injustice and the political impulse to struggle against them" (Santos 2014, viii). Feminism is therefore purposeless without a search for healing and truth, even if in the end there is no ultimate cure or final truth.[39]

In this sense, decolonizing feminist economics is an effort toward widening the register for audibility, enabling the visions, knowledges and positions of the Global South to bypass the opaque lenses of universal ethnocentrism associated with development. Thus, decolonizing feminist economics challenges the modernist imagination of capitalism as the universal telos for development and, rather than frustration or hope, offers us trust. In that sense, trust opens the possibility of relating with what we do not know, without being dominated by fear (as hope does)– with the aim to both know better the conditions of the possibilities of trust and at the same time define actions that promote the

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[39] Healing is understood here as a regaining of pride, dignity, and a complete humanity in the face of colonial and patriarchal forms that make the individual believe they are inferior.

realization of these conditions. Therefore, decolonizing feminist economics has a clear political intent.

IV. CONTEMPORARY COLONIAL FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT

Spivak (2016) "ask[s] us to allow the concept of development to overflow the interplay of capital and colony. This makes room for an acknowledgment of complicity—folded-togetherness—rather than see 'development' to be conceptualized as good or evil or both *after* colonialism" (1). This section follows Spivak's lead, examining deep-seated loyalties to notions of female autonomy and empowerment, and exposing contemporary colonial modes of development. Given the imposition of the rationalization of accumulation, market expansion, and land exploitation, it should come as no surprise that development economics are closely associated with colonialism. In this regard, Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela (2004) state that "[e]conomics is epistemologically comfortable with the notion of colonialism and imperial domination. . . . [It] can thus be soundly characterized as a colonial discourse grounded in exclusion and erasure of the

unfamiliar" (2–3). Understanding development as a colonial discourse (Escobar 1995) that contains dynamics of power and cultural-epistemic hegemony and is enacted through articulations of both racial and cultural differences in order to justify conquest and rule rather than to construct a culturally neutral economic path opens up space for disrupting its authority.

In order to disrupt the perverse logic of colonialism that naturalizes capitalism as the ultimate goal of development, in the proceeding section, I expose contemporary colonial forms of development. Accordingly, I distinguish here two colonial forms—the exploitation of labor and settler colonialism—in order to understand the different layers and levels of colonialism that lurk within contemporary development, paying particular attention to women's economic empowerment as one of the main contemporary development buzzwords and concerns.[40] In doing so, I highlight Mayan economic relations and understandings of emancipation, not only to disrupt the authority of development discourse, but more importantly, to offer a different social ethics.

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[40] Although it is important to understand the exploitation of labor and settler colonialism as *distinct* and *contemporary* colonial forms of "development," they routinely coexist and reciprocally define other forms of colonialism.

Sustainability of Life as Empowerment

One colonial form of development I identify here concerns the exploitation of labor and the enslavement of people from the Global South via the international division of labor in order to accumulate capital for the North, with females from the Global South bearing the brunt of the (emotional, physical, and economic) costs (see Spivak 1999). In this colonial form, exploitation is enacted via, for example, low wages, the deterioration of working conditions, export processing or free-trade-zones, the privatization of care, feminicide, and work migration. This colonial form relates to, and interacts with, the rhetoric of development through a set of technologies of subjectification that focus particularly on women from the Global South. If we ask why economically empowering specifically women has been "the smart thing to do" (UN 2017, 1), we find it is not coincidental (even if it is overdetermined) that it is the figure of the "woman-from-the-Global-South" that is so frequently called into the service of development. Spivak (1999) suggests that this figure is a "particularly privileged signifier, as

object and mediator" (200) to capitalist development. In this sense, by authorizing capitalist development projects through the "empowerment" of these women—who fail to realize their own interests and are subordinated to men—a patriarchal and "traditional" culture is justified in the name of development and used for appropriating and exploiting the bodies, labor, and knowledge(s) of women from the Global South for capitalist profit.

Getting women into paid labor and the autonomy of women to make choices are included in the HLP-WEE and the 2030 Agenda as the fundamental prerequisites for women's economic empowerment and are both arguments that have been made most forcefully within feminist economics (see Carrasco-Miró 2016). Behind these ideas lie the joint assumptions that firstly, paid labor empowers women, and secondly, that if only women had greater access to, and control over, assets and resources such as land, they could exercise economic autonomy in ways that would free them from marginalisation and male oppression (closing the "gender gap"), achieving with this the freedom to make their own choices. Yet many of these analyses and policies have addressed exploitation by automatically assuming (albeit unintentionally) a "first-world bias" (Wood 2003, 305). As shown by Charusheela

(2003), the assumption that the key to women's emancipation lies in enabling women's access to paid labor uncovers the implicit assumptions made by feminist economists about the social nature of paid labor and reflects a privileged, white European/US experience. In this modernist assumption, paid labor represents autonomy, choice, and self-esteem for people otherwise trapped by home, culture, or tradition (Carrasco-Miró 2016). However, paid labor has a very different meaning and historical connotation for many people. By contrasting the privileged experience of paid work with the experiences of females from the Global South, Charusheela (2003) shows a counter-history of paid labor, linking it not to empowerment, but rather to exploitation, dispossession, and structural disempowerment. Likewise, although feminist economists have dedicated considerable (and sophisticated) attention to the conceptualization of unpaid labor, Wood (2003) explains how feminist economists have generally done so without taking into account differences between females from the Global North and South. Imagining women only as capitalist and aspiring to modernity via the world of paid labor and committed to development are "better understood as ideological projections than as knowledge about specific people and places" (Charusheela 2009, 1).

In many Mayan languages (and also in many others) the concepts of development and empowerment do not exist. Instead, Mayan people venerate the concept of "life" as a harmonious relationship between nature, human existence, and the cosmos. This is not simply a matter of semantics, but rather a fundamental epistemological difference. Fluidity, duality, complementarity, proximity, and interconnectedness are some of the crucial themes of this epistemic frame (Marcos 2009). For many Mayan people, the economy is not simply a practice based on individual choices, shared material resources, self-sufficient knowledge, or social welfare. Rather, it is about a worldview that involves time and space, history and existence, and is governed by the culture of the sustainability of life (IIDH 2007). In this context, to "live well" is not about entering into the world of paid work and accumulating material goods, but rather expresses an economy of solidarity based on deep reciprocity.

The economic importance of reciprocal exchange in Mayan communities is based on values of gratitude, appreciation, kindness, and even a lack of desire for personal accumulation (Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014; IIDH 2007) rather than impersonal relations and savings. Based on the principle of reciprocity, gift-giving practices are very common and driven

largely by mutual obligation, social commitment, and connectedness. Here, gifting does not involve an expectation of a direct profit or an equivalence of value (as in the gift-giving practices of market societies), but rather rests on mutual obligation and a personal commitment to pay and to give (instead of contract relations), as well as the right to receive goods and services (Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014). In this context then, is development suggesting that a "good" economy or society can only be built on the rejection of solidarity, sharing, kindness, and nature? For any person or group falling outside of development, this remains a riddle.

Ideas of reciprocity and the sustainability of life challenge the discourse of developmental economic empowerment. The persistence of these patterns of economic relations in contemporary contexts and amid substantial change presents a challenge to any theoretical framework that denies their presence. Seriously considering different patterns of behavior and rationalities, and being mindful of specific cultural narratives of wealth, emancipation, and poverty might help feminist economists entertain the possibility that the culture of the sustainability of life does not necessarily present some sort of conceptual predicament. This shift would enable Mayan

economies to genuinely participate in the global construction of economic and social well-being, because then a lower level of material consumption, interconnectedness amongst all beings, and strong social commitments—that may or may not exist within the circuit of capital, and simply driven by its logic—could be viewed as a contemporary and serviceable ethic rather one than in need of empowerment.

Communitarian Self-Determination

Tzul (2015) argues that the first emancipatory concern of Indigenous Mayan females is communitarian self-determination, and not gender equality. Importantly, land is not a separate variable for Mayan economies and peoples (as it is in economics), but instead presents a fundamental notion via which to understand, not just the spiritual and sacred values attached to the land, but also the collective Mayan material organization of life. Yet, the world views and claims of Indigenous females do not feature in the women's economic empowerment development approach—even though ironically (or perhaps not), they are the very people that the members of the HLP-WEE and the 2030

Agenda with its SDGs state they are specifically committed to and working for (see UN 2015, 2017). Tauli-Corpuz (2015), UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, states that "[a]s they stand now, the SDGs are a step backwards from these achievements [global recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights].[41] Indigenous Peoples have been all but erased from the development agenda" (1).

The other contemporary form of colonialism inherent to contemporary narratives of development is settler colonialism. The dominant feature of settler colonialism is replacement and/or erasure of Indigenous peoples—their communities and their claims to land. Every day, Indigenous people in all regions of the world continue to fight against the exploitation of, and displacement from, their communal lands, as they are under siege from extractivist corporations (Tzul 2015). Yet, today's development agenda remains economically centered on the extraction and exploitation of natural resources (Carrasco-Miró 2017). Although feminist development economists have demanded women's access to land and have examined the

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[41] "The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that no development can take place on the land of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent" (UN 2008, Art. 19).

gendered dimensions of market and land reforms, the fact that these reforms rarely actually improve women's access to land, or Indigenous women's claims to collective land, has been completely ignored in their analysis (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013). As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, in settler colonialism "human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological and cosmological relationships to land are . . . made pre-modern and backward. Made savage" (5). Thus, the refusal to name, acknowledge, and attend to the ongoing effects of settler colonialism not only imperils the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and climate justice, but also the viability of building an economically just world.

During the last decade, we can see an increase of settler development projects actioned via land grabbing and carbon trading. In 2016 approximately twice as many such land deals were found to be in operation as in 2013, and up to 59 percent of these deals involve communal lands claimed by Indigenous peoples and small communities. Yet settler development projects are funded, promoted, and supported by international development agencies such as the World Bank, which plays a pivotal role in funding land deals to the value of over $8 billion

during the last decade (Oxfam 2012). On average, a land rights defender is killed every three days (Oxfam 2016), and while resistance movements against land grabbing and climate injustices are present and vocal at all levels, and UN declarations and human rights reports show that land deals are not conflict-free, the development community remains stubbornly silent about these issues. As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, "remaining silent on settler colonialism while . . . tacking on a gesture towards Indigenous people without addressing Indigenous sovereignty or rights. … are colonial moves" (19). These moves make colonialism seem natural, without origin (or end), and an inevitable component of development.

Faced with this (ongoing) process of settler colonialism and its powerful effects on Indigenous peoples, Indigenous females have been at the forefront of resistance to defend land, territories, and livelihoods from extractivism and the unrestrained commodification of nature (see Tzul 2015). While Mayan females who object to extractivist and other colonial projects call consistently and vehemently for post-extractivist strategies and environmental protection, they struggle simultaneously for social justice and economic emancipation (see Cumes 2012). Far from personifying a romanticized view of Indigenous peoples, today's

Mayan activists are engaged in a lasting political battle to defend their right to live in their own way, from their own world view, and in harmony with the land (Tzul 2015). The argument that I am making here is that the modernist assumptions that animate interventions aimed towards women's economic empowerment may hold little or no resonance with the actual lives of the women whom development projects seek to "empower." This is not to say that social relations in Indigenous communities are free from inequities, but rather to emphasize that deep commitments to the community and interconnectedness are more likely to outweigh individualistic calculation and ecocide.

Thus, attending to the construction of specific colonial forms of development and articulating alternative visions of how to build healthy, sustainable, local economies is an important approach to feminist economics and politics. If feminist economists are not to contribute to the marginalization of non-Western females' experiences, devalue and exclude some cultures and epistemologies, or to enact the logic of colonialism, then they should be able to imagine and invoke relevant and complex economic phenomena from non-Western, "different-from-capitalist" social relations in order to support their critical study of economics. This is, therefore, a work of epistemological and

democratic imagination, pointing to create new and plural notions of economic relations and social emancipation upon the ruins of development and its automatic modernist assumptions of what the liberated female self looks like.

Although there is reticence towards, or even complete negation of, current lived practices of the inherited philosophical values of the sustainability of life, communitarian self-determination, and complementarity, Indigenous females still claim them, still want to be inspired by them, and suggest them in contemporary struggles for social and economic justice—including gender justice and emancipation (Marcos 2009, Cumes 2012). These principles have been "a way chosen by Indigenous women of enhancing their empowerment and for struggling for equitable relations between men and women" (Marcos 2009, 195). Empowerment, therefore, here comes to be constituted within those principles, not simply in the act of making independent choices or obtaining paid labor. Hence, Mayan female empowerment is a strategy rooted in, rather than contesting, Mayan culture, philosophy, and cosmovision.

V.   GENDER EQUALITY AND THE COMPLEMENTARITY DILEMMA

Between 2007 and 2009, I worked as a feminist economist with an international development organization in Guatemala. During that time, along with other non-Indigenous females, I had several encounters with Indigenous Mayan females. In our discussions, we always reached a point where collaboration with Mayan females seemed impossible because our expectations of gender equality and their expectations of gender complementarity appeared irreconcilable, thereby creating (for us at least) a dilemma. It was clear that for Mayan females, the emancipation for which they were fighting was not equality—and thus quite unlike the one we claimed—but rather, rooted in the idea that women do not have a socially defined recognition and relationship of equality to men. This begs the question: what do we do when females in a different culture, in asserting their right to emancipation, do not attack a gender construction that we believe to be unequal and patriarchal, nor seek to change it with notions such as autonomy, which we consider essential to empowerment (Charusheela 2009)?

In our encounters, Mayan females explained to us that they see themselves as carriers of a collective conscience that does not separate the sphere of the individual's private life from the sphere of the community as a whole, the land in all its various meanings, and the cosmos. Mesoamerican cosmovision is comprised of cultural values and beliefs, economic relations, and concepts of time and space in which human beings, every element of nature, the universe, and the cosmos are all interconnected and affecting one another. In this cosmology, beings are not separate from one another—a view that clearly opposes the anthropocentrism prevalent in Western thinking and its belief in the domination of nature (see Haraway 2016). As Marcos (2009) argues, the cosmogonic principles of duality, complementarity, and equilibrium are central to Mayan epistemology and ontology, and they engender a very particular form of human collectivity, embracing everything in nature with little tendency to individualization. As Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun (2014) and Marcos (2006) point out, from a Mayan world view "the 'I' cannot be abstracted from its surroundings" (Marcos 2006, 127).

The principle of duality—not dualism—defined as a complementary duality of counterparts, is the centerpiece of Indigenous embodied thought and spirituality, and it is a recurring

component in almost every contemporary Mesoamerican community (Marcos 2006, 2009). This linking and ordering force is considered to be

> the origin of everything, composed by two different elements, two essences that are complementary and proportionate and form two parallel cosmos. . . . [T]he basic condition of human identity is that one can know oneself only in relation to the other. (Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014, 33, translation mine)

Thus, in this context duality "is not a binary ordering of 'static poles'", but a single bipolar principle (Marcos 2009, 40). This ordering device is not an elusive concept "somewhere" in the cosmos, but a reality perceived by Mayan people in their daily practices, including (but not limited to) their economic relations. This basic Mesoamerican dual classificatory principle is based on, and reflects, gender duality. The fusion of feminine and masculine in one bipolar principle is a recurring element in Mayan communities (Marcos 2009, Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014). Yet, to understand "gender" in the Mesoamerican universe, it "must be freed from assumptions of fixed dichotomous characteristics" (Marcos 2006, 14). This means that there is not an entirely feminine or entirely masculine being.

Rather, beings have these forces in different combinations or nuances in a flexible, fluid form, thus impeding stratification and constituting a dynamic complementarity. Under the principle of complementarity, "there is no one or two that dominates, all beings work hand by hand for the collectivity and the cycles of life" (Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014, 29, translation mine). Mutually exclusive groups are not part of the epistemic background of this cosmology, the malleability of which is still reflected in the way Indigenous females deal with empowerment (Marcos 2009).

Some analysts and feminists, myself included, have questioned the Mayan notion of feminine/masculine duality and complementarity as being regulatory, not only socially, but also in terms of sexuality (by only permitting heterosexuality). The prevalence of a perception with no correspondent in the Western understanding of the world could, perhaps, in itself explain my failure to comprehend those notions. What if in our feminist sensibilities a more truly dominative dualism lies in the disdain of these dualities? In a context where Indigenous culture has historically been (and continues to be) belittled and obscured, it is understandable that Mayan females are particularly sensitive to non-Indigenous feminist criticism of their culture. In this sense, it

is not a question of divided loyalties, but rather the ability to criticize without disqualifying Mayan cosmovison. What I have learnt through conversations with female and feminist Indigenous peoples is that these values do not just refer to, but rather exceed, relationships between men and women (Confluencia-Nuevo-B'aqtun 2014) and thus cannot be reduced to sexualities or gender roles (Cumes 2012). Mayan cosmic and moral equilibrium is based on a complex wholism with extreme dynamic tension, and is not a static repose of two equal weights. Thus, Mayan females "refer to equilibrium as the attainable ideal for the whole cosmos, and as the best way to express their own views on gender equality" (Marcos 2009, 41).

Yet, how to enter into dialogue with potentially incompatible social and cultural value systems? In our example, the explicit Indigenous assertion of gender complementarity clashes with the goal of equality that we—myself as well as other non-Indigenous females—claim. The tendency within feminist development to situate gender roles in culture, and to reduce culture to gender relations and expressions, places Indigenous females in a double bind, having to choose between gender equality or "culture." Yet the overriding feeling in narratives of development of having to choose decisively between social and cultural value systems is a

false dichotomy. By re-signifying and promoting the concepts of complementarity, duality, and equilibrium, Mayan females reclaim culture, but also open up meanings, venues, and strategies able to bridge theory and practice, discourse and their daily lives, fostering more equitable relations with males as well as among females. This is not to argue that complementarity and gender equality are necessarily incompatible. But they are *incommensurabl*e, posing a dilemma for the feminist economist who confronts opposing evaluations of the decisions of Mayan females. Yet, once we move beyond the general observation of commonalities between women (see Mohanty 1991), and instead of hiving off the female Mayan imaginary as merely "internalized oppression" or "tradition," we can examine this situation as a false dilemma of cross-cultural judgments concerning the understandings and actions of people in "other cultures"—a dilemma that depends on the criteria that are used in making the evaluation. Thus, beneath this "dilemma" lies a shared modernist ideology of a particular notion of the human being (i.e. individual autonomy and the freedom to make choices) as the only ground from which one can be empowered or come to feminist ethical judgments about one's cultural and societal norms (Charusheela 2009).

In this sense, decolonial thinking opens up an in-between space of tension that is not simply an extension of the Western episteme and leaves a possible space for non-Western worlds. Indeed, in our example, the feminist analyst needs a dialectical integration of both equality and complementarity ethical imaginaries. Ultimately, when asked whether we should prefer equality or complementarity, the correct feminist answer is not one or the other, but both and neither. We want both, but we want neither as established by the current development framework. In this vein, decolonizing feminist encounters can enable a fully communal imagination that offers a powerful mode of resistance to hegemonic representations of being and becoming.

VI.   FINAL REMARKS: THE POLITICS OF ARTICULATION

Women's economic empowerment cannot be understood from the single goal of material affluence, paid labor, the autonomy to make choices, and gender equality, in isolation from a more comprehensive notion of the economy and female emancipation. As I tried to show, Mayan females may embody a different

feminist politics and economics—plural not because they are enacted by bodies marked by ethnicity and gender demanding rights or claiming identity, but because they present Mayan epistemology and force into visibility the antagonism that govern our worlds. In this sense, I propose decolonizing feminist development economics as a politics of articulation accountable for economic difference and thus able to build communal politics. This articulation involves negotiating ways of knowing and being in different worlds simultaneously with the aim of transforming silences into sounds, invisibility into presence, and objecthood into subjecthood.

Thus, in order to imagine an emancipatory politics that provides a deeper economic understanding, feminist development economics needs decolonization, rather than to continually codify "empowerment" within the same modernist episteme. In other words, decolonizing feminist economics may offer the possibility of "thinking-different-from-capitalism" by opening up a space of political articulation and recognizing what is distinct—what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization. This involves an act of imagination on our part, as we force ourselves to unlearn (to create) new concepts, new terminology and new purposes, and to rethink our feminist political and economic imaginations. It

would also mean creating possibilities to build a shared political horizon for a "better" future—a future that, rather than being oriented-present, is present-oriented future.

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ARTICLE 4

ENCOUNTERING THE COLONIAL:

Religion in feminism and the coloniality of secularism[42] [43]

Abstract

The debate on feminism and 'religion' has rarely been suggested as a critique of modernity that has silenced other possible cultural, epistemological, and spiritual options.[44] Efforts have be made to

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[43] References and citations have been kept in the same style as in the original version of the article.

[44] There have been some important efforts in this direction, such as Braidotti's (2008) work on the postsecular turn in feminism; Marcos's (2009) consideration of Mesoamerican women's Indigenous spirituality; and

ascertain whether 'religion' is 'good' or 'bad' for – or indeed an ally or threat to – women's liberation. More specifically, in a European context, contemporary discussions of 'religion' and the rights of women have been very much centred on Islam. Yet, none of these narratives have resolved the intrinsic colonial character of modernity. This paper explores the debate on both Islamic and Western feminism from a decolonial perspective. It argues that today, feminist theory faces the tremendous challenge of how to encounter the colonial and not only redefine, but also review the concepts and categories upon which Western feminism bases its arguments. Drawing on the work of the Spanish-Syrian Islamic decolonial thinker Sirin Adlbi Sibai, this paper develops a critical, self-reflexive approach that questions secular assumptions regarding feminist analyses of 'religion'. In doing so, I present the decolonising of feminism as an invitation to (re)imagine our feminist encounters.

Stengers's (2012) work on animism in science. Unfortunately, as these authors also point out, this approach remains limited and seen as particularistic in the creation of feminist theory (see my argument in Section III regarding Western feminism and Islam).

I.   INTRODUCTION

In Europe, gender and women's rights have become central markers in national and international debates on 'religion' and even more specifically on Islam.[45] More than any other debate about 'religion', heated arguments concerning the image of women within Islam and the role of Islam in legitimising and reproducing gender inequality and patriarchy within Western European societies have appeared in recent decades (Cesari and Casanova, 2017).[46] There are profound divisions amongst scholars and these debates often pivot around asking whether Islam is 'good' or 'bad' for the condition of women in society. In feminist circles, discourses about feminism and Islam have been mainly concerned with the compatibility (or incompatibility) of Islam and women's liberation (Adlbi, 2016b). The compatibility thesis is based on the idea that it is possible to create, in Islam itself, a modern emancipatory alternative to Western feminism or an approach compatible with it (e.g. Ali, 2014). Conversely, the

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[45] I choose to expressly use single quotation marks when referring to religion within this text, bringing into question the Western and Christian centric view attached to it. See also Section V in this article and Adlbi (2016b).

[46] I capitalise the West and Western in this article in order to indicate its constructed and contested nature.

incompatibility thesis, both for non-feminists and feminists, argues that Islamic feminism is an oxymoron, made up of two fundamentally incompatible ideas – Islam and feminism (e.g. Amorós, 2009; Okin, 1999). Some Muslim females discard Islamic feminism because, they argue, feminism is a Western invention imposed on them from outside (e.g. Al-Badawi cited in Hale, 2013). They ground their arguments, not so much in normative ideals and the structural socio-economic context, as in empirical evidence about the actual patterns of gender relations and the interpretations of the *Quran*, *fiqh*, or *shariah*. Al-Badawi, for example, claims that '[Muslims] have *taqwa* – piety. If we understand *taqwa*, we will never have feminism in Islam' (cited in Hale, 2003: 208). Concurrent with the incompatibility thesis, some feminists find it inconceivable that women asserting their attachment to Islam could at the same time involve themselves in an act of subversion.

> If by feminism is meant easing patriarchal pressures on women, making patriarchy less appalling, 'Islamic feminism' is certainly a feminist trend. But if feminism is a movement to abolish patriarchy, to contribute toward a society in which individuals can fashion their lives free from economic, political, social, and cultural constrains, then 'Islamic feminism' proves considerably inadequate

because it can never challenge the traditional, patriarchal system. (Shahidian, 1998, 51)

There is a third way of reflecting upon the relation between Islam and the status of women. It consists in the xenophobic recourse to discourses of opposition between the two as a form of Islamophobia (Adlbi, 2016b) – that is to say, as a place of enunciation of what is truly considered antagonistic: Islam and the West.

This text explores the debate surrounding Islamic feminism and Western feminism from a decolonising perspective. It focuses on the work of the Spanish-Syrian Islamic decolonial thinker Sirin Adlbi Sibai, specifically her work on women, feminism, Islam, and decolonial thinking, and her profound critique of the epistemological foundations of feminist discourses on Muslim women, Islam, and Islamophobia. Rather than centring the article on a summary of work on feminism and Islam, with the colonial implications that this would carry – not least as the task of explaining the work on feminism and Islam is for the people who are producing this knowledge – instead, I question some of the secularist assumptions in feminist analyses of the 'religion' question. I also try to engage with Adlbi's work via a critical, self-reflexive approach, as a contemporary contribution to feminist

theory and social emancipation. It may be better for a Western, white feminist such as myself, raised in a Catholic environment and trying to do critical and decolonising work, to think in terms of (1) working with Islamic thinkers and struggles that we recognise as always being subject to historical transformation (Abu-Lughod, 1993); (2) building upon Muslim activism and scholarship that shows 'how racism operates to shape the surfaces of bodies and worlds' (Ahmed, 2004: para. 49); (3) considering our own larger responsibilities and structural racism in order to address forms of global injustice and inequalities (Abu-Lughod, 2002); and (4) to question some Western feminist secularist assumptions.

The article is structured as follows: Section II briefly discusses Western European secularism – its colonial myths and implications – and identifies the coloniality of secularism in Western European thinking and identity. In Section III, I examine the dilemmas and colonial practices I have encountered whilst writing on the work of Sirin Adlbi Sibai and suggest critical encounters grounded in cognitive justice – that is, to recognise alternative forms of knowledges and engage with them in terms of equality (Santos, 2014). In Section IV, I engage with Adlbi's work on Islamic feminism and her project to overcome oxymoronist thinking with regard to Islam, and examine the

ethnocentric/cultural relativism divide and the question of religious women's agency. Then, via Adlbi's personal experience – her narration of a feminist event at the Autonomous University of Madrid – Section V analyses the colonial implications of the encounter and proposes a decolonial politics of articulation. In Section VI, I suggest decolonising feminism as an invitation to (re)imagine our feminist encounters.

II.   BELONGING WITHOUT BELIEVING: THE COLONILITY OF SECULARISM

Throughout Western scholarship, there has been a tendency to assume that 'Islam is the villain rather than to *interrogate* other factors, including the role of the West itself in creating or facilitating the difficult conditions in which many Muslim women and men find themselves' (Kongar, Olmsted and Shehabuddin, 2017: 19, emphasis in original). Popular culture and politico-governmental apparatus insist on (re)producing the Arab world as 'Other' – static, patriarchal, backwards, radical, fundamentalist, and terrorist – via the exploited and abusive expression of 'our' security. Today in Europe, right-wing populist parties and their leaders, such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Pia Kjærsgaard in Denmark, have reinforced their positions by

focusing on security and the 'Islamic threat' to the West, placing a uniform anti-Muslim discourse on mainstream political agendas (Kongar, Olmsted and Shehabuddin, 2017). Although anti-Muslim attitudes have been part of Western rhetoric and narratives for centuries (Said, 1978), in recent years, anti-Muslim sentiments are increasingly visible in public discourses throughout Europe. In the West, Adlbi explains, both female and male Muslims have become 'the Other by antonomasia' (2016b: 129). These new 'anti-Islamisation' politics owe their popularity to their engagements with Islam, and have changed the agenda from a politics of xenophobia and anti-immigration to that of 'Islamophobia' (Kongar, Olmsted and Shehabuddin, 2017), whilst simultaneously adopting discourses of women's rights, gay rights, and secularism. I agree with Casanova (2011) that this tendency reveals, amongst other things, Europe's fear of 'religion' in general, rather than of the religious views or actors themselves, mixed with a conscious (or unconscious) idealisation of a modern and secularised understanding of European identity.

The Limits of European Identity

The postulates of the 'clash of civilisations' are intimately invested in the 'idea of Europe'. This 'idea' is based on a

fundamental, overarching premise, namely, the conviction of the superiority and intrinsic development of a Western secular civilisation that places itself above, and as the measure of, all 'Others' (in both senses of the word). This is the definition of a Western secular 'us' that constitutes itself in negative terms from what 'we are not'. In this context, the superiority of the West is taken for granted and the epistemic privilege of Western European identity politics – as the starting point from which to produce judgements of the 'Other' and global imperial designs – is an unquestioned presupposition. The feelings, beliefs, and emotional motivations of European Muslims remain largely unknown, or are simply subjected to a superficial deconstruction of what is considered to be an essential aggressive inclination in the Islamic religion. Yet, evidence clearly shows us a Muslim pacific revolution, shared and conducted by people from all ages, confessions, social classes, sexual orientations, and political tendencies that stand together in the streets to claim justice, dignity, and freedom (Adlbi, 2015; El-Tayeb, 2011). This evident and vibrant pacific revolution radically questions the limits of European modernity and its secular project – both in the contexts of its cultural boundaries as well as its conceptual cul-de-sacs.

The issue of the cultural boundaries of modernity is entangled with the issue of women's rights, the struggle against sexual

discrimination, and feminism, particularly with regard to what is considered one of the most characteristic achievements of European modernity: secularisation – defined here as the prevalent decline of religious beliefs and practices. In processes of secularisation, 'religion' becomes a private matter, expressed by the individual and located in the domain of voluntary commitments (Casanova, 2011). Therefore, from a Western secular perspective, its significance becomes (amongst others) that of an individual human right – as the right to religious freedom. Yet, this premise assumes precisely the belief that freedom of 'religion' is only possible in a world free of 'religion' (Santos, 2014). However, what happens if this is not the case? Is the European process of secularisation irreversible (Casanova, 2011)? What, if any, might be the contribution of religion(s) to feminist theory and women's emancipation in Europe? The Eurocentric tradition answers these questions on the basis of its Enlightenment premises: its conception of rationalism – that is, the production of knowledge that is not bound by the constraints of religious dogma (rationalism) or religious authority (freedom); that is private (personal belief) and universal (secular reason as universal discourse). This naturalisation of 'unbelief' or 'non-religion' as the common human condition in modern societies is a characterisation of the dominant theories of secularisation (Cesari and Casanova, 2017). All of these elements together produce the secular fantasy in which secularisation implies

progress and modernity, whereas the continuation or reassertion of 'religion' implies regression and a lack of modernity. In this moral framework, modern secular societies are considered to be 'ahead' and 'better' – more rational and freer – than those that are 'behind' or non-modern, which are understood to be somehow not yet fully modern.

Europeans tend to experience their own secularisation as an essential component of their modernity. To be secular in Europe is not lived as an existential choice people make, but rather as a natural consequence of becoming modern (Casanova, 2011). This would seem to confirm Hervieu-Léger's thesis, according to which the usual European attitude to 'religion' resides in 'belonging without believing' (2006: 3).

> This attitude entails a distant shared memory, which does not necessitate shared belief, but which − even from a distance – still governs collective reflexes in terms of identity. The Danish citizens who do not believe in God and never attend church, but who faithfully continue to pay the tax that goes to the Lutheran Church because they like to see religious buildings properly maintained, and the French citizens who are nostalgic for the beautiful church services of their childhood and complain about mosques being built

in France while never setting foot in church until 'the bell tolls' for them, illustrate how one can 'belong without believing', the European counterpart to the expansion of beliefs without belonging. (Hervieu-Léger, 2006: 3)

This 'belonging without believing' seems to be perfectly compatible with secularisation and is sometimes used as a pretext for the suppression and silencing of European cultural differences. In this respect, the historical, Enlightened self-understanding of secularism functions to confirm the superiority of our contemporary modern secular view of other, supposedly 'stuck in time' or 'primitive' religious forms of understanding and being (Casanova, 2011). Thus, secularism itself becomes a regulating 'religion', forcing 'Other' religions to the margins of society. It is this hegemonic representation – its mode of knowing and being that claims universality for itself – that I term the coloniality of secularism.[47]

The Coloniality of Secularism

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[47] I use coloniality here as defined by Lugones (2008), pointing towards the power apparatus created during the colonial period, and referring to the way in which works, knowledges, authority, and intersubjective relationships are articulated amongst themselves, through capitalism, the idea of race, and the sex-gender system.

The need to protect women's rights and advance gender equality has become today, at least in Europe, the most common normative justification of secularisation. As argued above, one of the most distinct facets of secularisation is the confinement of 'religion' to the private sphere, which depends upon the individual's private conscience and choice, and is thereby eliminated from public life. Yet, the privatisation of 'religion' is a contingent product specifically of European history (Braidotti, 2008) – of the colonial territories and freely manipulated by colonial powers (Santos, 2014). Despite all the normative democratic discourses about the modern secular society and the privatisation of 'religion', it is valid to ask how secular European states actually are (Casanova, 2011). If one looks at the reality of current European societies, rather than at the hegemonic secularist rhetoric that surrounds them, it becomes evident that most European societies are by no means strictly secular (Cesari and Casanova, 2017; Casanova, 2011). They tend not to live free from religious or philosophical influence and, therefore, are neither neutral nor objective. Furthermore, religious beliefs and practices have not inevitably declined. Yet, as argued by José Casanova (2011) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2015), Western scholars usually take secularisation for granted and dismiss 'serious attention' to 'religion', including the acknowledgement of the particular

Christian historicity of Western European development and its intrinsic global-colonial dimension.

The coloniality of secularism may be rooted in European colonial history, but it continues in various guises to the present day.[48] As argued by many authors (e.g. Adlbi, 2016b; Cesari and Casanova, 2017), the particular, specifically Christian, Western European dynamic of secularisation became globalised with the expansion of European colonialism, and became 'a universal teleological process of human development from primitive irrational religion to modern rational secular consciousness' (Casanova, 2011: 59). Thus, the coloniality of secularism rests on the peculiar colonial premise that the cosmologies, spiritualties, and religions of the overwhelmingly non-Western and non-Christian majority are ontologically inferior, thereby confirming the superiority of a modern secular outlook. Hence, looking at the coloniality of secularism shows that the problems lie not only in simplistic portrayals of a monolithic 'fundamentalist' Islam that fail to recognise the great diversity amongst Muslim groups and

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[48] As post/decolonial and anti-colonial scholars and struggles have illustrated, colonialism endures beyond the end of historical colonialism. There are other ways through which occupation continues today, not necessarily through foreign occupation, tutelage, and the prohibition of state formation. See Mohanty (1991), Said (1978), and Santos (2014).

societies both in the past and in the present, but also in the equally problematic and distorted essentialist construction of a modern secular Europe that fails to recognise Christianity as a fundamental part of the past and present of Western European modernity. Yet, my aim here is not to prove the benevolent and progressive character of 'religion', but rather to continue opening up the debate, thus enabling more nuanced and critical feminist analyses without them becoming rapidly subsumed into instances of patriarchal or fundamentalist reaction. It is to the task of critically widening this debate that the following sections now turn.

III.   DILEMMAS   AND   CRITICAL   SELF-REFLEXIVITY

When I considered writing about feminism, Islam, and the work of Sirin Adlbi Sibai as a contribution to an edited volume, some key dilemmas emerged that I find important to mention here.[49] For me, as a white Spanish woman, raised as both a Catholic and a Catalan, and who works from and within academic feminisms,

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[49] Work published in the book *Masters of the World* (2018, forthcoming), edited by Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

writing forces me to occupy a space infinitely uncomfortable and populated by many forms of violence, not least because to speak and/or write about feminisms and Islam implies the appropriation of the work of Muslim colleagues – a basic tenet of white privilege. Racism always finds it more credible to listen to an atheist or agnostic than to attend to situated knowledges[50]. The space to explain work on feminism and Islam is one for the people who are actively engaged in the production of that knowledge. My task is to fight Islamophobia amongst people who, like me, have been socially constructed and embedded within it. Nonetheless, I would like to question in this article some of the secular assumptions dominant in feminism and argue that Muslim cosmologies, knowledges, feminisms, and resistances are capable of guiding not only female Muslims, but all of us. I recognise that, regardless of my individual motivations, in terms of global power relations, I work from within a dominating discourse that imposes Western modernist values on others, not least by classifying them as 'non-Western' or 'non-White' (or both). I would hope, however, that we are not all entirely trapped in 'West' versus 'non-West', or 'religious' versus 'secular' narratives – that there is some possibility of developing counter-hegemonic and decolonising projects by working and sharing with others, and by

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[50] See Haraway's (1988) work on situated knowledges.

repositioning ourselves, at least temporarily, both metaphorically and literally.

Particularly, with and from Muslim knowledges, I am reflecting upon my own positionality – of (un)learning many issues that make me think as an outsider of Islam. From my feminist perspective, I consider key the possibility of co-existence of Islam, Muslim knowledges, cosmology, and feminism. I agree with other scholars, including Abu-Lughod (2002), Ahmed (2000, 2004), Mohanty (1991), and Nagar and Geiger (2007), that how to engage with the colonial – to redefine and review the concepts and categories upon which Western feminism bases its arguments – is a tremendous challenge facing feminist theory today. Post/decolonial, religious, anti-racist, and anti-colonial scholars and struggles have already made the critique that many Western feminist assumptions about, for example, female agency – such as norms of motherhood, beauty, and the way in which the subject thinks of such issues from her normative and ethical perspective – are derived from an exclusively Western idea of norm, role, and moral/social order (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1993). Thus, feminist theory needs to go further than it has in formulating its analyses of the changing and contradictory agency of women in Muslim contexts.

There have already been some extraordinary efforts in this direction. Abu-Lughod (2002), Adlbi (2012, 2015, 2016b), El-Tayeb (2011), and Razack (2004) provide just some of the recent examples of decolonising scholarship within feminism and Islam. Unfortunately, their approaches are often seen as descriptive or particularist, relating to certain 'special experiences', and thus are not treated as theoretical contributions and interventions engaged in the creation of feminist theory. By acknowledging that they represent crucial theoretical contexts that fundamentally question feminist analytical approaches, it may be possible to dissolve the binaries within which some women do or possess 'theory', whilst others have 'particular circumstances' or 'case studies'. In this regard, when asked what the political implications for feminism would be if non-Western, non-Christian religious theories, knowledges, and struggles were to be 'taken seriously', my answer would be that the practice of an inclusive feminism that goes beyond the colonial would be closer than ever.

Critical Self-Reflexivity

As with any other axis of oppression, such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, and phobias directed towards members of the

LGBTQI community, it is insufficient to simply identify oneself as not part of the oppression in order not to be so. An intense and thorough work of identification and critical self-reflexivity that is attuned to our institutional, material, and geopolitical positions should also be undertaken. Yet, white Western scholars' and activists' admissions of 'bad' practices or dilemmas may be taken up as signs of good practices and thereby, once again centre Western thinking and whiteness. The task for white Western subjects would then be to stay implicated in what we critique, turning toward our roles and responsibilities in histories of racism as histories of this present – to turn away from ourselves and toward others (Ahmed, 2004: para. 59). Whilst this is still not sufficient, it may at least clear some ground upon which the work of exposing racism might offer the conditions for other kinds of work to be undertaken.

In this vein, critical reflexivity may constitute the core of what Nagar and Geiger (2007) call 'situated solidarities'; a process of (un)learning across divergent and unequal locations and complex positionings in time and space, also known in Ahmed's (2000) work as 'ethical encounters', referring to engaged encounters that allow room for differences to flourish and do not diminish the encounter in an effort to assimilate the 'Other'. In that sense, this engaged work requires an opening up of the encounter in order to

(un)learn without the expectation of fully assessing – a step taken from the decolonising premise that 'there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice' (Santos, 2014: 1). This means that, rather than a tolerant approach to 'religion' that hides the coloniality of secularism under the conditions of global capitalism, the encounter must be grounded in cognitive justice – that is, to recognise plural worldviews, cosmologies, and knowledges, and to engage with them on equal terms.

IV.   OVERCOMING OXYMORONIST THINKING

In Western feminist circles, the ethics that embrace spirituality and 'religion' rather than advocating for the secularisation of state, politics, law, and morality is generally theorised as 'irrational' (Braidotti, 2008; Casanova, 2011) – an obsolete remnant of 'traditional', 'pre-modern', or even 'un-democratic' societies or groups (Razack, 2004). In this context, much feminist discussion of the secular-religious divide in Europe, more specifically of feminism (as secular) and Islam (as religious), has moved forward as if the two are clearly delineated 'opposites' that occupy the entire space of ethical and analytical possibility as either compatible or incompatible. As a feminist, one is therefore unavoidably forced to choose sides when one tries to asses

women's decisions and activities in different religious and cultural contexts – either secularism and feminism, or religion and Islam. On the one hand, choosing one side could lead to universal ethnocentrism (European, secular, 'rational' Enlightenment) – a criticism with which Western feminist theorists have been grappling in their analyses of female's oppression elsewhere for the past two decades or more (e.g. Mohanty, 1991). On the other hand, by attempting to avoid universal ethnocentrism and its colonial implications, the recurring feminist problem arises that not choosing could simply collapse into a cultural relativism that strengthens patriarchy – any and every 'religion' and religious practice that is desired or accepted by someone is absolutely beyond criticism, since we have no non-ethnocentric basis for assessing the 'goodness' or 'badness' of a 'religion'. This impasse begs the question of how to move away from this ethnocentric-relativist divide and instead assess the decisions and activities of women in different cultural contexts.

One cannot understand the significance of the issue without considering the dynamics of thesis and antithesis of the coloniality of secularism, marked by on the one hand, Western European orientalism and colonialism, and non-Western and non-Christian people's struggles, responses, and resistance on the other. In this regard, I find Adlbi's (2012, 2015, 2016b) analyses

of discussions of feminism and Islam by both Muslims and non-Muslims under the suspicion of a dialectical imposition of coloniality useful. This section follows Adlbi's lead, examining the ethnocentric-relativist divide and the question of religious women's agency in feminism as a dialectical imposition of coloniality. I argue that this imposition has been conducted at least partly under the Enlightenment notion of agency.

The Epistemological-Existential Prison

Adlbi (2012) argues that there are very few discourses by Muslim women about feminism, women, and Islam that escape from what she calls the epistemological-existential prison. Adlbi's prison is a wide space that allows possibilities of expression that are complex and diverse, but limited by an ideological, epistemic, imaginative, and conceptual siege that defines the rules of the game – who can speak, how they can speak, and from where they can speak. According to Adlbi, this prison is based on the myth of universality and sets defined rules that must be followed before any engagement with a theory, problem, or object can occur and be named, analysed, or eventually transformed into a plan or a policy. Adlbi (2016b) argues that the main part of the contemporary debate on Islamic feminisms is foreclosed in an

oxymoron. According to Adlbi, Islamic feminisms cannot constitute themselves as an emancipatory alternative since they are prisoners of colonial thinking and its dialectical binary structure – a structure in which modern European superiority is taken for granted, and Western style is the norm. Thus, within this epistemological-existential prison, any comprehension of reality is reduced, imagination is limited, and the possibilities of plural and heterogenic enunciations of individuals are removed.

To return to the question of how to assess women's decisions and activities in different cultural and religious contexts, in an oxymoronic Islamic feminism, one can either argue against Islam, or one can be a feminist and judge religious practices while adopting a secular Enlightenment notion of agency. In this second option, human beings demonstrate appropriate, rational agency free of external constrains such as history and culture, only under self-conception. However, one cannot be both a feminist and a critic of the coloniality of secularism. With this assumption, one finds that "an ethnocentric gaze coming from the only culture [i.e. Western European, secular, 'rational' Enlightenment] that *can* articulate a feminist vision" is crucial for feminist theory and politics (Charusheela, 2009: 205). Here, the ethnocentric feminist analyst uses the Enlightenment notion of agency in her analytical and ethical judgment of religious women's practices and actions.

In doing so, the ethnocentric feminist, by attributing meaning and content to such agency, creates a marginalised people and with a backward culture who lack any agency themselves. In this way, religious women can have culture, but not agency. We should note, however, an unintentional consequence of this ethnocentric feminism: by assuming that a Western European, secular, ethical basis is necessary for feminist challenge, local patriarchal structures become reinforced (Charusheela, 2009). Ethnocentric feminists agree with local patriarchal arguments that in Islam, women's roles cannot change; that as a society where confrontation, contestation, and change cannot arise, Islam is immune to feminist and women's emancipatory visions. Consequently, any change assessed as feminist must necessarily reproduce the cultural and ethical perspective of the modern secular West and thus cannot be part of the 'authentic' religious group.

Therefore, there exists the need to solve the colonial nature of the oxymoronic Islamic feminisms beforehand. As argued by Adlbi (2016b):

> [M]y critique is not about *denying* Islamic feminism, let alone of their principles and main contents and achievements, of which without doubt I feel part and

defend. Far from this, my criticism is a heartrending call to a new *revolution*, to overcome the colonial nature of Islamic feminisms, to claim and urge a project of profound and global emancipatory liberation. A decolonial, anticapitalist, antipatriarchal, antisexist, anticlassist and antiracist revolution. An overcoming of *oxymoronist* thinking … To overcome the debate around the oxymoron requires disarticulating the antithetical dichotomy that confronts the terms *feminism and Islam*, showing the context where the possibilities of this discourse have started and been created and revelling the theoretical and political implications of it. (69, translation mine, emphasis in original)

In this way, Adlbi proposes to situate Islamic feminisms in a decolonial place that transcends oxymoronic Islamic feminism.

By taking into consideration the effects of the complex epistemic violence that is systematically enacted by discourses regarding Islamic feminism – either of compatibility or incompatibility – we can now disarticulate the oxymoron. Given a shared notion of agency (ahistorical, 'rational', universal human nature), feminism (as secularism), and Islam (as 'religion') emerge as 'opposites' that need to be united as compatible or divided as incompatible, because they are historically created as contraries: they form two

types of response from within the Western secular/Christian Enlightenment rhetoric to the process of colonising non-Western/non-Christian religions, and to the legacy of colonialism. So, Islam/'religion' and feminism/secularism are not merely 'opposing positions', but are caught in an epistemological-existential prison that leaves no possible space for non-Western/non-Enlightenment-based Islamic feminism. Hence, by opening the possibility of a serious non-Western/non-Enlightenment analytical position, the non-ethnocentric, non-relativist feminist analyst can now place religious belief and practice in the domain of meaning it inhabits *within the culture*, thus expanding our boundaries for comprehending such actions and activities in a sympathetic attempt to describe the *agency* it possesses – the worldviews and meanings by which she contributes to reflecting on, and coming to terms with, the world around her.

What is at stake here, from my point of view, is whether we can seriously argue for the idea of the religious female – in this case the Muslim female – as an agent, not in the modernist sense of the word, but in the minimal sense required in order to make any claim for the possibility of a non-Western/non-secular feminist theory that is not simply a branch of the Western European secular/Christian worldview. Without any such minimal notion of

agency and an internal cultural capacity for change, Muslim women may become seen as unchanging, helpless, frozen, or – as Adlbi notes – as the 'Muslim woman with hijab' (2016b: 113) – the basis of the colonial discourse of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia and the 'Muslim Woman with Hijab'

In her essay, 'The Prison of Feminism: Towards a Decolonial Islamic Thinking', Adlbi (2016b) argues that Islamophobia emerged in World War II as racist and colonial discourses about Muslims, intimately related to the emergence of development and feminist discourses. In that sense, Adlbi moves away from the classic definition that, in a very limited way, defines Islamophobia as a form of racism centred around 'hatred of Islam and Muslims', presenting it instead as a colonial discursive and conceptual device that has been transformed via various different historical conjunctures. This colonial apparatus specifically deals with subhumanisation, epistemicide, and the annihilation of Islam and Muslims. In this vein, Adlbi (2016b) suggests two basic hypotheses regarding Islamophobia.

The first is that Islamophobia is structured around different types of colonial discourse (e.g. developmentalist, feminist, orientalist, modern, terrorist, democratic) and that this is based on the construction and transversal production of a monolithic colonial object, which she calls the 'Muslim woman with hijab'(Adlbi, 2016b: 113). In this way, the author affirms that Islamophobia is gendered in three different ways: higher levels of Islamophobia towards Muslim women than men; the intrinsically patriarchal and sexist modern/colonial world-system and; through a sexed and feminised construction of prototypical women of the Third World – the 'Muslim woman with hijab'. These uniform and static categories constitute the 'Muslim woman' as unable to adapt to other realities, oppressed, subjugated, illiterate, and submissive. In this sense, according to Adlbi (2015, 2016b), the colonial construction of the oppressed 'Muslim woman with hijab' is, therefore, the basic pillar that structures Islamophobia in all its different forms. The second hypothesis that the author raises is that Islamophobia, on a macro level, necessarily and multi-directionally experiences its own construction at the micro-political and discursive level, as well as in the construction of the subjectivities and inter-subjectivities of individuals. In this way, emphasising the logics, techniques, and construction of colonial subjectivities allows us to explore the way in which Islamophobia has been part of the logic of coloniality in the annulment of the 'Other' (Adlbi, 2016b). Thus, the 'Muslim woman with hijab' is

a feminised and sexualised colonial object (Adlbi, 2012); a prototype of the Third-World-Woman, as Mohanty (1991) argues and, thereby, an object of intervention, classification, and regulation from which Arab-Muslim civilisation has been, and is still being, colonised (Adlbi, 2016b).

Mainstream feminist analysis obsessively focuses on the 'Muslim woman with hijab' (Adlbi, 2015, 2016b), fiercely denouncing 'Muslim patriarchy' (Abu-Lughod, 1993, 2002) and not, for example, the Western coloniser and racism. In this way, Muslim women are represented only as victims without agency, with false conscience, and/or even not fully understanding their own situation. Unreflective feminist secular identities and feminist secularist self-understanding renders silent the fact that Muslim women in Europe face racist violence, and, therefore, do not situate feminism in a place opposed to the patriarchy they claim to denounce, but rather as part of the same intersectional oppression. This move also assumes that Western European modernity reduces patriarchy, ignoring the complex ways in which modernity can contribute to women's empowerment as well as their subjugation.

The practice of regulating women's bodies and lives is not limited to Muslim women, but to women all over the world, since the world-system – defined by political-economic structures as well as ideologies – is intrinsically patriarchal. The impositions and prohibitions placed on female bodies, either for their clothing, or for abortion, or birth control are not exclusive to Muslim countries and function according to the same basic principle: the infantilisation of women and violence enacted upon our bodies. Yet, black, Muslim, Chicana, and post/decolonial feminisms and struggles point out that within hegemonic feminism we remain anchored in the universalisation of our own experience and that this in effect conceals our privileges. In this sense, polyvalent, complex Islamophobic discourse, when constructing the 'Muslim woman with hijab', makes some of these privileges invisible and thus infantilises, humiliates, justifies violence against, and excludes others.

Black, Muslim, and non-Western feminisms point out that a patriarchy intersected by class is not the same as 'just' patriarchy (Abu-Lughod, 2012). This mechanism is equally true if patriarchy is also intersected by class and race, and if it is intersected by class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or an infinity of other possible axes, then patriarchy appears and arises in many complex and very different ways.

Hence, patriarchy is a complex power structure that is crossed by multiple intersectional axes and power structures – such as colonialism and capitalism – that inform the realities of each individual or group in the world (Mohanty, 1991). Yet, patriarchy is not necessarily the axis that articulates or determines the rest, as mainstream feminism insists (Abu-Lughod, 1993). It depends on the context in which we find ourselves, on the reality we observe, and on the point of view of who is crossed or traversed by the differing power structures. Yet, it is important to underline here that Muslim females, as with other 'culturally racialised' females, suffer from types of violence that are much more complex than those experienced by white Western women. This is because, especially post-9/11, non-Western and racialised females are intersected by destructive and brutal colonial power structures that, in a systematic way, reinforce the patriarchates and other power structures that affect their lives. This does not imply the non-existence of local patriarchates, nor to diminish their importance, but rather that global perspectives and a complex analysis of the interaction between local/internal and external/global processes are necessary.

It is therefore crucial that Western (hegemonic) feminism positions itself alongside Muslim females and accounts for what they need in the way they need it. Resisting one's privilege has

nothing to do with cultural relativism. Rather, it is what some black, Chicana, Indigenous, Muslim, anti-colonial, and de/postcolonial feminists and struggles have called a feminist practice of the first order (Ahmed, 2004). If anything can unite us, it is the right to our own bodies, and the fact that each woman defines that right in the framework that is most appropriate to her subjectivity and experiences. The next section discusses this last point through a feminist event at the Autonomous University of Madrid and the colonial implications of that cultural encounter.

V.   ENCOUTERING THE COLONIAL

The principle of secularism is violated daily in the name of a false secular neutrality that constructs an identitarian myth based on a fictitious binary opposition, in which Europe is secular (or Christian) and Muslims are foreigners or an external enemy – a construction that fails, not least as there are many European Muslims. We should ask what the dynamics at work are that make Muslim people choose between two identities (either European or Muslim). In this regard, Adlbi (2015) narrates an experience she had at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) – the university at which she studied – on the occasion of International

Women's Day 2010, regarding the representation of Muslim women in Europe:

> [I]n March 2010, I was walking around the campus of the UAM when I found that the Women's Institute of my university had put together, on the occasion of the International Women's Day, a series of posters hanging on various trees and joined by a thread, where the 'universal' symbols of female domination were represented, the main symbols of patriarchy. I found it very interesting, so I went from tree to tree ... but, suddenly, I came across this image! The truth is that it is difficult to describe the sensation that remained in my body (which lasts with me until today) ... there we were face to face. I, a Muslim woman, Arab, of Spanish nationality, of Syrian origin, soul, feeling, suffering and resistance, of Hispanic-Arab-Syrian culture, Moroccan by adoption, descendant of a long saga of free and strong Muslim women and men, intelligent and fighters, that I have decided to wear hijab, as part of my freedom and my faith, as I want and I have the right and the legitimacy to understand them. And the poster, an oppressive, racist, Islamophobic and colonial representation that has been made of me ... The image was stealing my voice, the freedom and the privilege of self-representation, of giving myself, my beliefs, my faith, my

philosophy, my value system, my worldview, the meanings that I would like to give them. (Adlbi, 2015: 1, translation mine, emphasis in original)

As shown by Adlbi's (2015) narration above, a productive, emancipatory, and enriching cultural encounter was not possible, since the colonial has not been encountered beforehand. In the experience described above, Adlbi shows how the representation of Muslim women constructed within hegemonic European feminism (in this case within the Spanish state) is false, racist, and violent. In Adlbi's narration, Western feminism by itself becomes the true 'subject' of the story. Muslim women, on the contrary, are never placed beyond the debilitating generality of their 'object' status; the 'Muslim woman with hijab'. This form of dehumanisation – according to which Muslim women cease to be people, but rather become objects of analysis, frozen in time waiting for 'us' to understand the issue and decide to 'act' on them, and therefore 'we' grant 'them' the status of humanity or not – is the basic structure of racism.

In Adlbi's example, the violence of white women towards racialised females is marked by racist social structures that legitimise and nourish that violence via structures that subalternise some in favour of the (also constructed) superiority

of others. This subject-object dichotomy constitutes a form of colonial domination (Adlbi, 2016b) in which white Western feminists are complicit with patriarchal/imperial states that enact oppressions against Muslim females within the West. As in much of the formerly colonised world, Adlbi (2016b) argues, the very term 'feminist' is challenged in Europe and often seen as an imposition; concurrently, many prominent Muslim activists (e.g. Ali, 2014) embrace the term. It would be a serious mistake to assume that non-feminists necessarily come from an 'authentic' Muslim perspective of situated subjectivity, and those calling themselves feminist are inherently Westernised and/or inauthentic. Whereas Western feminism has tended to regard 'religion' as the main cause of women's oppression through which practices against women's well-being and rights are legitimised and naturalised, many Muslim women see their spiritual lives, both individually and collectively, as sites of resistance and liberation. At the same time, Islam is contested and discussed amongst Muslim females and within movements, with a range of intermediate positions and a multiplicity of voices giving rise to creative possibilities as well as to open-ended contact zones and narratives.

A Decolonial Politics of Articulation

I propose here a decolonial politics of articulation to account for difference – diverse knowledges, cosmologies, religions, and spiritualities with particular forms of subjectification that enunciate fundamentally different, yet always entangled worlds (Carrasco-Miró, 2018). This articulation involves negotiating ways of knowing and being in different worlds with the aim of transforming silences into sounds, invisibility into presence, and objecthood into subjecthood. Yet, to be able to account for difference, a process of (un)learning across locations, positionings, and encounters is needed. Thus, (un)learning what one was taught to be, think, and imagine, may create possibilities of understanding and social emancipation that are more aware of themselves and their constitution. To unlearn and account for difference, then, one must first create some feminist critical distance (cultural, historical, and disciplinary) from the Western/secular theoretical and epistemological tradition. Yet, to unlearn is not to dismiss, or to ignore. Keeping distance does not mean discarding the important insights of Western feminism, thereby ignoring its possibilities for social emancipation in the West. Rather, such critical distance means opening up the epistemological and theoretical ground upon which new possibilities may develop (Santos, 2014). Thus, what is significant here is not simply which feminists are in a position to 'see' or theorise, but what feminists are capable of doing when

generating knowledge – namely, constituting ourselves as political actors in feminist encounters. It is, therefore, necessary to insist on making visible the mechanisms that allow a racist feminism, or some women to exclude other women, or indeed, some women to think they have the legitimate right to express their opinion on the decisions made from subjectivities and experiences different from their own, despite the fact that part of that oppression is constructed precisely by our prejudices.

VI.   DECOLONISING FEMINISM

Muslim women have actively entered the public sphere of Muslim societies. Also, for the first time in history Muslim women have not only entered mosques en masse, but are in many cases also leaders of the contemporary mosque movement (Mahmood, 2005), thereby challenging the image of the mosque and the *Ummah* as a public assembly of men. In this regard, Mahmood rhetorically asks: 'why would such a large number of women across the Muslim world actively support a movement that seems inimical to their "own interests and agendas", especially at a historical moment when these women appear to have more emancipatory possibilities available to them?' (2005: 2) It is precisely this public expression of female subjectivity and

agency, and the popular character of the women's Muslim movement, that challenge secular feminist assumptions and modern conceptions of society.

For many women in Europe, as around the world, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, spiritual and material needs are connected and difficult to separate. Works such as those of Adlbi (2015, 2016a, 2016b) in the Spanish context, or those of El-Tayeb (2011) with regard to Denmark and the Netherlands, help to show the visceral importance of spirituality to many European women's lives and the limits of approaches to well-being that do not include a focus on women's spiritual concerns. In that sense, in Islam, for example, faith and spirituality cannot be considered as a 'choice', but as an act of worship with its own spiritual horizon. For many people, Islam is a way of being – of being in the world, knowing, feeling, and relating in/with existence, with reality and nature. Islam, as Adlbi (2016a) states,

> is not a 'religion', since, this is a Christian-Western-centric concept that has been used for the colonisation of the rest of the world and of all the plural forms of existence and knowledges in the world. Islam is an ethics and praxis of the most absolute liberation of all forms of slavery: selfishness, materialism, exhibitionism,

appearances, consumerism. It is an order of values and is, as Abdelmumin Aya [contemporary neo-Andalusian thinker] would say, a return to the *fitra*, original nature and is to assume the debt we have with reality, with existence and with all its things and its creatures. Islam is, therefore, compassion, humility, generosity. It's like the Muslim philosopher Taha Abderrahman says, an epistemology of Ethos. (Adlbi, 2016a: 1, translation mine, emphasis in original)

As Adlbi explains here, Muslim identity is at its core a faith, a practice, and a spirituality. Recognition of the Muslim identity therefore necessarily entails a recognition of this first and fundamental dimension of faith and, by extension, acknowledging the rights of Muslims to carry out all the religious practices that give shape to their spiritual life.

This is not to say that Islam is free from inequalities or patriarchy. In fact, many Islamic scholars and struggles have criticised Islamic inequalities and patriarchy from within their religious traditions and claims, whilst simultaneously highlighting the fact that faith and spirituality are important for many females, some of whom also (re)interpret 'religion' from *within their world view* as a liberating force or as a source of self-esteem. To move

forward, it is crucial to incorporate into our feminist analysis an awareness of white Western European bias, colonialism, and privilege. More generally, given the role of race, gender, sexuality, geography, *and* religion in both national and international injustices and decolonising projects, it is crucial that greater attention be paid to intersectionality and pluralism in feminism. Thus, understanding feminism as plural is not to account for separate views of diverse issues, but as *relational* and continuously subject to processes of (un)learning. In this regard, one of the most productive facets of the debate surrounding Islam, feminism, and political struggle is, I think, a decolonising feminism that attempts to include within the same analytical horizon the limitations of, not only Islamic feminism, but also Western secular feminism. Indeed, both conceptions of feminism lack a critique of the modern mechanisms that reproduce unequal power relations and perpetuate the coloniality of secularism under the legal fetishism of formal equality.

A decolonising approach to feminism renders, therefore, the relation between Islam and Western European modernity far more complex and opens up possibilities to (un)learn and critically review our theories, views, projects, and positions from our particular ways of resistance and liberation. Furthermore, a decolonising feminism serves as an invitation that begins and

advances without fear through the colonial encounter – a process by which we might begin to re-evaluate and reclaim previously colonised and appropriated knowledges as contemporary contributions to feminist theory and social emancipation. That is, decolonising feminism is a way by which to attend to the inevitable incompleteness of knowledge, the infinite richness of emancipatory imaginaries, and of beginning to heal what Anzaldúa (1987) calls the 'colonial wound'.[51]

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[51] The fact that spiritualties, regions, lands, and people around the world have been classified as 'underdeveloped' economically and mentally.

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SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRILATERAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: NEW DONORS, SAME COLONIAL PRACTICES?

Towards decolonising solidarity [52] [53]

Abstract

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[53] References and citations have been kept in the same style as in the original version of the article.

The rise of South-South Cooperation and Trilateral Development Cooperation (SSTC) as a "manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South" (UNOSCC, 2018: 1) has generated much debate on the extent to which these development partnerships constitute a new development paradigm – one more relevant to the needs of the people from the Global South – or whether they are merely a disguise for a new form of imperialism. This article aims to push further these categorisations and show a more nuanced picture by examining the SSTC solidarity approach, thus explicitly confronting the inherently political nature of development as well as the uneven power relations present in SSTC. Drawing upon the recently signed SSTC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Brazil, Mozambique, and the World Bank, I analyse the agricultural development narratives and social imaginaries underpinning the MoU in order to better understand the underlying SSTC solidarity patterns and motivations in this development cooperation. In so doing, I argue that the concept of solidarity used in the current development framework reinscribes colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal logics and serves to obscure the complicity and continuity of colonisation. At the same time, this article suggests decolonising solidarity as a strategy that centres the sustainability of life in all its manifestations as both its stated aim and eventual goal.

Keywords: solidarity, transnational corporations, South-South and Trilateral Development Cooperation, Brazil, Mozambique.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The global aid architecture is currently undergoing significant redesign, following agreements reached at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Korea, in November 2011. The forum and its declaration established for the first time an agreed global framework for development cooperation that embraces traditional aid patterns (i.e. North-South); the so-called "rising powers" of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa; South-South co-operators; private funders; and civil society organisations. Today, official development discourse and practice (hereinafter referred to as "development") is supplemented with respectful discussions of new development partnerships that foreground and manifest a "spirit of strengthened global solidarity focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people" (UN, 2015: 6). South-South

Cooperation and Trilateral Development Cooperation (SSTC) has emerged against this backdrop of change – one that supports a new architecture of solidarity within aid and development.

SSTC is premised on a solidarity commitment between countries of the Global South based on mutual learning, joint benefits, and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the imperative to "leave no one behind" (ECOSOC, 2017; UN, 2015). SSTC usually involves a development relationship in which a Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor and/or multilateral agency (e.g. the World Bank) "partners" with a so-called "pivotal" country (e.g. Brazil) to work with a third "partner" (recipient) country (e.g. Mozambique). Whilst earlier examples of SSTC can be traced back at least to the 1980s (Amanor and Chichava, 2016), in the last five years or so, interest in SSTC has accelerated. In recent years, the profile, number of, and financial resources attached to SSTC activities worldwide has burgeoned. In the context of this growth, the Food and Agriculture Organization has, for example,

created donor-funded facilities to increase the flow of cross-border technical assistance. The World Food

Programme has expanded its centre of excellence model from Brazil to China and soon India. The WB [World Bank] has launched a US$15-million South-South Facility, and new forums for dialogue such as the Investing in Africa Forum. The African Development Bank launched an SSTC Partnership Facility with Brazil and IFAD's [International Fund for Agricultural Development] development partners have launched new approaches to promoting SSTC. (IFAD, 2016: 17)

Additionally, the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stress the importance of SSTC to the implementation of the global development 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 17 – to "[r]evitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" – places particular emphasis on the critical role of SSTC in achieving sustainable development (UN, 2015: 18). This clearly demonstrates how SSTC is reshaping the contemporary landscape of development aid.

Whilst SSTC is invested in a broad range of areas, it focusses predominantly upon agricultural development (Shankland and Gonçalves, 2016; WFP, 2016) – an area that Western donors have

ignored, since their interventions mainly centred on "good governance" and human rights; "interventions that were often seen as unwelcome meddling by [Southern states, while] the absence of a productive sector investment has been a concern. … (Scoones, Amanor, Favareto and Qi, 2016: 8). In this sense, SSTC has challenged hegemonic narratives of paternalistic Western development aid and economic expertise. It depicts the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and DAC frameworks as imposing conditionalities based on unjust and unequal international relations and the legacies of colonialism (Amanor and Chichava, 2016). Yet, as SSTC grows in importance and the global development Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development – with SSTC as its flagship – gathers momentum, there is a growing concern amongst Southern civil society organisations, scholars, NGOs, activists, and communities that SSTC is driven by, and benefiting, Southern and Northern elites and corporations rather than creating genuine alliances and solidarity between societies to the benefit of the poorest and most vulnerable in society and the planet more generally. In recent years, several SSTC development initiatives have been accused of precipitating land grabs, forced displacements, human rights violations, and environmental deprivation (Cheru, 2016; Clements and Mançano 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2014; McEwan and Mawdsley, 2012). This raises questions about how to ensure that the stated aims of the SSTC

solidarity approach – i.e. to alleviate poverty and "leave no one behind" – are actually realised.

Some have argued that "new development partnerships" are simply masks for a new form of imperialism. Yet, it is too simplistic to say that SSTC is merely colonialism with new players. Whilst there are undoubtedly echoes from the past, SSTC is set in a new geopolitical and ecological context that operates both through patriarchal and racist axes, as well as via the micro-practices and local scales of development on the ground. Furthermore, aid, trade, and investment are increasingly seen as mutually implicated dimensions (rather than separated, as in traditional aid modalities) and the mix of these factors now constitutes the new politics of development cooperation (Pérez, 2017; Scoones et al., 2016). In many cases sources of finance are global, and the structure of corporations and alliances connected in ways that confront any direct association with specific nation-states (Amanor, 2013). Simultaneously, for the first time in history humanity is exceeding the physical limits of the planet, putting both the planet and ourselves in danger (Klein, 2014). Yet, a significant amount of contemporary policy writing on development and aid, including that relating to (re-) emerging donors and SSTC, is generally hesitant to explicitly defy the

inherently political nature of development – to acknowledge either its gendered and racial dynamics, or the uneven power relations between different actors enrolled within it. There are clearly social, political, cultural, and economic drivers at the heart of development (Escobar, 1995, 2016; Harcourt, 2016; Kapoor, 2008) as well as SSTC (Scoones et al., 2016), but these are neither uniform nor uncontested. Thus, SSTC and its solidarity approach need to be analysed within this framework of changing patterns of aid, trade, and investment, and the politics of development – with an emphasis on axes of culture, gender, and race, as well as changing capitalist relations under global corporate governance.

Within this framework, this article examines the extent to which SSTC is creating more scope and space for solidarities to emerge around the world – whether it is resulting in paradigms of solidarity based on justice and equality that favour the poor, or is instead resulting in further dependency on capitalist accumulation and competition in the Global South, as well as reinforcing fundamentally unjust structures. Drawing on the recently signed SSTC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on sustainable agricultural development in Mozambique, drawn up between Brazil, Mozambique, and the World Bank, in the next section, I discuss developmental agricultural narratives and social

imaginaries in the Nacala Corridor of Mozambique, as a means by which to better understand the patterns and motivations underlying the MoU and the SSTC solidarity approach. In Section III, I examine who bears the responsibility and is accountable for the outcomes and risks of SSTC agricultural development projects in the Global South. In this way, I analyse the various roles played by civil society organisations in Brazil and Mozambique, corporations and development "partners" such as the United Nations, and the World Bank. Section IV takes a critical look at the sustainable development approach in which the SSTC is embedded, and foregrounds the insoluble "capital versus life" conflict implicit within it. I argue that the concept of solidarity currently used in development reinscribes colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal logics and operates to obscure narratives of complicity and ongoing colonisation. In Section V, I claim it is possible, however, to articulate a form of solidarity that is committed to decolonisation, and offer some parameters to centre the sustainability of life as both its stated aim and eventual goal.

II. NARRATIVES OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL IMAGINARIES IN THE NACALA CORRIDOR

In May 2017, the World Bank (WB) sponsored Mozambique and Brazil's South-South partnership in a SSTC agreement to "improve sustainable rural development" in Mozambique (WB, 2017: 1). To that end, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB was signed, spanning

> a broad range of issues regarding land management and biodiversity in the form of financial and technical support to several operations, including the Mozambique Forest Investment project (MozFIP); the Agriculture and Natural Resources Landscape Management Project (Sustena); the Conservation Areas for Biodiversity and Development (MozBio); the REDD+ Readiness Support Project; the Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Local Communities (MozDGM); and other analytical work and technical assistance. (WB, 2017: 1)

According to the WB data available on its official webpage, the estimated total costs of these projects are approximately US$131.1 million over the next five years. The projects are based mainly within the Nacala Corridor – the Niassa, Nampula, and Zambézia provinces in Northern Mozambique.[54] Mark Lundell, the WB Country Director for Mozambique, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, stated during the signing of the MoU that the

> [WB]'s overall strategy emphasizes improving the quality of life of the 'bottom 20% of the population', a large portion of which lives in rural areas in both countries. 'Hence, agriculture, forestry and land management are key sectors to achieve the Bank's objectives'. (WB, 2017: 1)

The WB's optimistic assumptions clash with current claims from several local and international civil society organisations, NGOs, scholars, and peasants regarding both active and proposed agribusiness development projects in the Nacala Corridor. They denounce these development projects on the grounds that they divest local farmers of their land and only benefit foreign

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[54] This calculation is based on data provided by the World Bank (2018).

(Brazilian and Japanese) corporations, as well as the Mozambican elite (People's Declaration, 2017; Shankland and Goncalves, 2016). In the Mozambican context, these tensions surrounding agribusiness coalitions come to a head in the highly controversial Program for Agricultural Development of the Tropical Savannah in Mozambique (ProSAVANA). As Brazil's largest agricultural development project in Africa, which aims "to modernize Mozambican agriculture" (Clements and Mançano, 2013: 53), this SSTC partnership between Japan, Brazil, and Mozambique with the WB's support has spawned the international No to ProSAVANA Campaign (People's Declaration, 2017). The campaign accuses ProSAVANA of being a business scheme for the corporate takeover of agriculture in Mozambique and the largest land grab in Africa (JA! 2013; People's Declaration, 2017). In order to build a clear understanding of the patterns and motivations underlying the Brazil-Mozambique-WB MoU, it is important to analyse the connection between past and present Brazilian agricultural cooperation with Mozambique – specifically how Brazil and Mozambique (and its development partners, such as the WB) understand their place in a broader global agricultural development context. To this end, this subsection explores the narratives behind these patterns, as well as their overarching principle of common solidarity.

Narratives of Agriculture and Development: Uncultivated Lands and the Inefficient Management of Natural Capital

The 2007–2008 financial crisis, coupled with the upsurge in agricultural commodity prices that characterises recent decades, fuelled a rush to find secure investment opportunities for available capital. In this process land and agriculture emerged as an "asset class" and became gradually attractive (Ouma, 2014). This caused widespread concern regarding a "global land rush" (OXFAM, 2012) by investors, focused especially in Africa (Scoones et al., 2016). In this context, through its advisory services, the WB – the largest development organisation in the world with a multi-billion-dollar portfolio and exercising major influence over both the private sector and governments – has spread agricultural developmental narratives that encourage governments to make land easily available to investors. The WB, therefore, not only funds many large land deals in Africa (OXFAM, 2012), but also influences how land is bought and sold.

Data compiled in the WB's 2011 report, *Rising Global Interest in Farmland*, highlights the "potential availability [of global] uncultivated land" (WB, 2011: xxxiv) concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Today the WB – as well as other institutions, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – remain very optimistic about the intensity of this interest, maintaining that, if executed responsibly, agricultural development investments would result in a mutual benefit scenario by increasing productivity and creating jobs in countries rich in natural resources, but poor in capital. SSTC, thereby, is positioned here as an "effective instrument" of solidarity – one able to fulfil this scenario whilst simultaneously contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among countries of the Global South (ECOSOC, 2017: 1). In the newly signed SSTC MoU between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB, Mark Lundell states: "This MoU underscores the World Bank's commitment to supporting both Brazil and Mozambique realize their potential in rural development through a landscape approach to sustainable management of natural resources such as forestry and agriculture" (WB, 2017: 1). Using the narrative of a "landscape approach" by "managing land, water, and forest resources, that form the foundations – the natural capital – for meeting countries' goals of food security and inclusive green growth" (WB, 2014: 7) and the management of natural resources (i.e. natural capital; WB, 2014), the WB (2014, 2017) claims that

agricultural development investments in Mozambique will "jumpstart" agricultural productivity and serve as an engine for driving economic development.

However, by encouraging foreign investment in land that is believed to be either "potential" or "unused", these policies have enabled the seizure of land that local communities have sustainably used and managed according to their own worldviews and traditions for centuries. To those affected, these land deals made in the name of solidarity's development approach – the sharing of knowledge, mutual benefit, and sustainable development (UNOSCC, 2018) – have been nothing short of blatant land grabs (JA!, 2013; People's Declaration, 2017), resulting in territorial dispossession, socio-territorial conflicts, human rights violations, epistemic violence, the polarisation of the relationship between a small super-rich elite versus impoverished people, and environmental deprivation and displacement on a massive scale (Human Rights Watch, 2014; OXFAM, 2012), leaving the (recipient) country poorer economically, socially, culturally, and politically.

Far from being objective and neutral, or the acts of a techno-scientific expert authority that can be transported anywhere around the world, development policies are always cultural artefacts (Kapoor, 2008). They emerge from a time and a place, and are framed under particular narratives and constraints. As Escobar (1995) points out,

> development has functioned as a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory, or object to emerge and be named, analysed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan. (Escobar, 1995: 41)

In other words, development sets the parameters of what it means to be wealthy or poor, developed or underdeveloped (or developing), and who learns from whom. In this regard, movements that explicitly speak out against "sustainable" agricultural development show that, not only are their territories physically settled, but they are also ontologically and epistemically occupied (Escobar, 2016; Kari-Oca 2 Declaration, 2012; People's Declaration, 2017). Hence, the struggles against these territories – their communities and people – *also* constitute

epistemological struggles. Many Indigenous people (see Kari-Oca 2 Declaration, 2012), native scholars (see Tuck and Yang, 2012), and struggles (see People's Declaration, 2017) actively denounce the oppressive conditions inherent to these development projects – expressed in the way projects demonstrate disrespect towards Indigenous and local people by devaluating their worldviews, sacred sites, cemeteries, burial places, and ecosystems that have organised their life since tens or hundreds of years. The People's Declaration (2017) for the No to ProSavana Campaign, for example, denounce capitalist agribusiness development projects and demand instead another production model in Mozambique; one based on the culture and knowledge of peasant life and the well-being of the people:

[W]e reject the model of exclusionary and discriminatory development based on the agribusiness that is imposed on us, since it is based on the expansion and accumulation of capital by large investors and is based on the production of profit and not the well-being of the peoples. We demand respect for the culture and knowledge of the peasant class. We demand a process of discussion and creation of a peasant agriculture plan, from the bottom up, where the challenges, needs and expectations of peasants

will have to be discussed and the Plan formulated.
(People's Declaration, 2017: 1)

Unequal exchanges between cultures – the culture of development (see Carrasco-Miró, 2018; Kapoor, 2008) and the culture of local people – thus implies the death of the knowledge of the marginalised culture, and hence the eradication of the social groups that possess it. This form of epistemic violence and racism found in development narratives has been termed by postcolonial, decolonial, and anti-colonial scholars and thinkers as the colonisation of knowledge (Fanon, 1963; Simpson, 2001; Tuck and Wang, 2012).

In this vein, the SSTC notion of "potential" or "uncultivated" lands as either wasteful or inefficient and, thereby, its solidarity-led intervention – the sharing of knowledge, mutual benefit, and sustainable development – has links to colonialist narratives of settler invasion. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that, in settler colonialism, "human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological and cosmological relationships to land are . . . made pre-modern and backward. Made savage" (5). Thus, these

relationships to land, water, air, oceans, and the subterranean earth (hereinafter collectively referred to as "land") make strong connections between past and present colonial projects and highlight how understanding one position can disrupt the status quo of complicity in the ongoing racism and colonisation of Indigenous, native, and peasant people's lives and knowledges. With land use tied to profit, what becomes viewed as inefficiency and against mutual benefit is antithetical to "proper" capitalist enterprise and thus provides further "evidence" that the Indigenous, peasant, and native people are less developed, supporting the idea that the seizure of "potential" land is justified or even destined to happen. The claim to universality that characterises sustainable development (i.e. economic growth and Western modernity) is gradually displayed as simply one form of particularism, the specificity of which consists of having the power to define all knowledges and worldviews that are its opponents as being ontologically and epistemologically inferior – namely traditional/non-modern or underdeveloped/developing with uncultivated/unused/inefficient lands. Yet, to defend the land does not mean to sacralise it, but rather to reconstruct it so that it can encompass all beings and objects in their myriad diversity, including ourselves.

Development's "landscape approach" to agriculture has at its core the management of natural capital (UNDP, 2016; WB, 2014). Natural capital is also one of the key elements of current sustainable development frameworks (see Carrasco-Miró, 2017) and refers to the environmental assets of a country – especially those from the Global South – and comprises natural resource stocks, land, and ecosystems. Natural capital narratives stand for a "new" development method of intervention in the environment and agriculture, reframing nature as "a specific type of capital, which needs to be measured, conserved, produced, and even accumulated" (Kenis and Lievens, 2015: 8). According to the WB (2018: 1), the "[e]arth's natural capital has been used in ways that are economically inefficient and wasteful, without sufficient reckoning of the true costs of resource depletion". In these narratives, nature should be valued economically if we are to protect it globally.

If nature is measured in terms of its economic value, then the protection of the environment in agricultural development is a form of investment and trade. In this approach, the biodiversity of ecosystems is not valuable because each form of life is an end in itself, embedded in communities of mutual support and solidarity. Rather, it is valued only as a source of "ecosystem

services" for development (see the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, WB, UNEP and UNDP, 2016). In this narrative, nature comes to represent a collection of tradable ecosystem services and durable goods that are used in production as either infrastructure, equipment, or price, which are "mobilized to defend productivity gains, minimize costs of capital expansion, and stave off crises of reproduction" (Lohmann, 2016: 4). Ecological cycles, such as water or the regeneration of the soil, thereby, become "services" that can enter the market. Thus, nature here is objectified and its value is reduced to a unique value of scale: price. However, economic estimation is only one of multiple ways by which to evaluate nature.

Emerging from a dualist ontology of human dominance over so-called "nature" – understood as "inert space", "resources", or "capital" to be acquired – SSTC solidarity narratives of knowledge exchange, mutual benefit, and sustainable development can thus be said to provide the most effective means for the ontological occupation and ultimate destruction of local relational worlds and people. Within these narratives the criteria of efficiency, market and economic profit are imposed, whilst ecological, cultural, religious, sacred, or aesthetic values are "left behind". Measuring nature in this way not only reduces the value

of nature itself to mere artefacts of technical instrumentalisation; it also removes any possibility for public dialogue about its valorisation (Carrasco-Miró, 2017). The different narratives people articulate concerning the importance of a natural area – its flora, fauna, and habitat – and its ecological richness – for example, the beauty of its landscapes, cosmovisions, or sacred places – are reduced or removed in this capital dimension to a singular scale of expression, namely, price. Hence, it is in the context of these narratives of solidarity that Brazil and Mozambique are perceived by potential investors as being "land abundant" with unexploited capital, unlimited business opportunities, and as countries with considerable capacity to increase agricultural output through the further expansion of existing agricultural borders.

Social Imaginaries and the Claim of Similarity

The SSTC solidarity approach is premised, not only on an interest in knowledge exchange and mutual benefit, but also on a claim of similarity. The idea that, as a former Brazilian minister of foreign affairs once said, "for every African problem there is a Brazilian

solution" in a way of showing how solidarity works in the diplomatic world (AMORIM, 2016: 1), has become a popular slogan of Brazilian development cooperation in Africa. In the MoU between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB, for example, the WB (2017) states:

> Brazil and Mozambique share many similar challenges and opportunities; they are both internationally recognized for their natural resources, ecological richness and biodiversity hotspots, and both grapple with resource exploitation challenges. With experience in supporting natural resource dependent communities and managing large forest ecosystems, Brazil offers capacity in areas relevant to Mozambique's efforts to enhance the living conditions of its rural population and promote sustainable natural resource management. (WB, 2017: 1)

Assuming an equivalence of interests simply because two states are deemed to be developing or located in the Global South is both naïve (Scoones et al., 2016) and, I would suggest, orientalist. In this rhetoric, "developing countries" and the Global South are represented as a fixed or monolithic category, overlooking the many differences (class, gender, caste, age, sexual, historical, regional, ethnic, linguistic, and institutional) that exist within and

between those countries, communities, and people. Nonetheless, SSTC solidarity narratives do more than merely generalise and simplify: they essentialise, presenting a "natural" congruity between very different Southern states – their problematics and their people. Postcolonial and decolonial thinkers (e.g. Fanon, 1963; Mohanty, 1988; Simpson, 2001) have already alerted us of these essentialising gestures, which so often mask sexist, racist, and/or orientalist stereotypes and consolidate mechanisms of privilege and position. Furthermore, by "culturalising" the problems of countries and communities, SSTC's solidarity approach fails to address deeper structural problems, ignoring the colonial, gendered, historical, economic, and social roots of these problematics and solidarities and thus, concealing once again the culprits responsible for "playing the system" to their advantage.

In the SSTC between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB, two different landscapes lie at the heart of the social imaginaries mobilised around solidarity between Brazil's and Mozambique's agricultural development: the "miracle of the *Cerrado*" in Brazil (The Economist, 2010), based on an international export "agricultural powerhouse" (WB, 2009: 44), and the Northern Mozambican savannah; the Nacala Corridor region. In the SSTC, following a large campaign to market various Brazilian models of

agricultural development (Cabral, Favareto, Mukwereza and Amanor, 2016), key Mozambican policymakers as well as development practitioners have become enthusiastic disciples to the belief that Brazilian agribusiness could help to make the *Cerrado* agricultural powerhouse a reality in the Nacala Corridor in Mozambique (Shankland and Gonçalves, 2016). This process has been supported for some time by development agencies such as the WB and the UN. The WB, for example, has been enthusiastically promoting a landscape imaginary of "Africa's 'Guinea Savannah'" (WB, 2009: 5) defined as a "sleeping giant" (WB, 2009: 1) that is crying out for development and investment in commercial agriculture to awaken its *potential*. Various campaigns were launched to sell the idea of transforming Mozambique into an agricultural exporter, encouraging international investment, particularly from Brazil (Rincón and Mançano, 2017). These campaigns – with their associated stories about the potential of millions of hectares "available" to Brazilian farmers in Mozambique – alerted grassroots groups and generated solidarities in both countries regarding what soon became characterised as a major land-grabbing threat (Clements and Mançano, 2013; People's Declaration, 2017). These concerns were aggravated by references to the social imaginary of the Brazilian *Cerrado* as a model to be replicated in Mozambique.

Given that the SSCT between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB is predicated on a claim of similarity –the replication of the *Cerrado* agricultural model in the Nacala corridor in Mozambique – it is vital to ask if any of these important claims of job creation, sustainability, food security, and poverty alleviation were actually realised by the expanding monocultures of soy and agribusiness entities in the Brazilian *Cerrado* over the last three decades. This question is especially relevant given that such promises of capitalist agriculture in Brazil remain largely unfulfilled and are highly contested from many differing and fragmented positions in Brazil's domestic politics (Rincón and Mançano, 2017). Furthermore, today Brazil has one of the most unequal land systems in the world, with just 1.5 percent of rural land owners effectively inhabiting 52.6 percent of all agricultural lands (DATALUTA, 2012). Research shows that the benefits of Brazil's model of agrarian capitalism for small farmers and peasants have been relatively limited (Cabral et al., 2016), whilst the impact on the country's rich natural diversity and forests has been devastating – many studies, reports and data (e.g. Clements and Mançano, 2013; Relatório de Insustentabilidade, 2015) reveals extensive deforestation, the displacement of rural producers and Indigenous communities, erosion and soil compaction, and the contamination of regional water resources due to the heavy use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers in the

production of cash crops. Furthermore, as argued by Clements and Mançano (2013), studies maintain that the

> mechanized production of soybeans and sugarcane, or any other agricultural commodity does not create an abundance of direct employment opportunities and often cannot provide sufficient work for all the people who have been displaced by the imposed monocultures. . . . Family farming in tropical regions generates 35 jobs per one hundred hectares. (Clements and Mançano, 2013: 8)

According to Altieri and Bravo (2009), in Brazil, for every new worker employed in soybean production, 11 workers employed in the agricultural sector are displaced.

However, rather than having the Brazilian landscape imaginary adjusted to fit the reality of the Nacala Corridor region, it has been the Corridor itself that has been redefined. Linked patterns of investment in certain areas, particularly along such corridors, allow otherwise highly diverse corporations to link logistics and infrastructure – for example, mining and agribusiness. As an illustration of this, behind the highly controversial master plan of

the ProSAVANA project in the Nacala Corridor team was the Brazilian consultant GV Agro – the agribusiness consulting arm of the leading Brazilian business school Fundaçao Getúlio Vargas. GV Agro is also connected with the Brazilian mining giant Vale Moçambique, who dedicated US$4.4 billion to the Nacala Corridor project (Shankland and Gonçalvez, 2016), is supported by the WB, and is still present in the Corridor. Vale Moçambique (amongst others) is currently accused of both human and environmental rights violations, such as forced labour, espionage, and irregular environmental licensing (Relatório de Insustentabilidade, 2015). Yet, GV Agro, Vale Moçambique, and the networks of both Brazilian and global capital with which they are associated have been mapping the Nacala Corridor since long before SSTC agreements with Mozambican and Brazilian governments came into effect.

Hence, SSTC solidarity narratives based ostensibly on the principles of mutual learning and joint benefits to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are in practice narratives that operate within the dominant schemes of global agribusiness and capital accumulation. SSTC interventions rarely create platforms for a more sensitive debate on sustainable agriculture and solidarity. Instead they reflect the dominant

narratives of current agricultural development, which promote capital accumulation, market penetration, and the integration of smallholders to global market circuits. In this sense, the underlying SSTC processes of Brazilian, Mozambican, and WB engagements in Mozambique – including the recent MoU – share many similarities with the accumulation imperatives of agribusiness from elsewhere. This begs the question of who assumes the risks linked with large-scale agricultural land acquisitions and foreign agribusiness in Mozambique.

III. WHO BEARS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE OUTCOMES?

In October 2017 the 3rd Peoples' Triangular Conference gathered together around 200 people, amongst whom were peasants, representatives of social movements, NGOs, faith-based organisations, academics, students, activists, and members of the No to ProSAVANA Campaign from Mozambique, Brazil, and Japan. Their aim was to "profoundly and democratically reflect Mozambique's development model" (People's Declaration, 2017: 1) and demand that someone takes responsibility for the

current unjust outcomes of the agribusiness project in the Nacala Corridor. The People's Declaration (2017) denounces the following:

1. The priorization and insistence on non-inclusive policies and programmes that do not respond to the needs, challenges and will of the peasant class.
2. Massive private investment in agribusiness, with emphasis on ProSAVANA, PEDEC [Project for Economic Development Strategies in the Nacala Corridor], the New Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security, the Nacala logistics corridor development program and Sustenta program. These have as [their] main focus the large-scale production of monocultures, mostly commodities to provide external market.
3. The ongoing and proposed programs have promoted the use of GMO [Genetically Modified Organism] seeds to the detriment of native seeds and the peasant way of life. . . .

In light of the above findings, we, the peoples of Mozambique, Brazil and Japan present at this Conference, demand and denounce . . . that the government of Mozambique and its partners respect the Constitution of

the Republic and other laws in force in the country. (People's Declaration, 2017: 1)

In the face of growing criticism of the ProSAVANA project – especially the way in which the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Mozambican government have conducted the whole ProSAVANA process and caused physical and emotional damage to people and communities – a group of peasants and civil society organisations, including Japanese civil society organisations, opened an objection case against JICA in 2017 and submitted a complaint to an independent committee of examiners based in Tokyo, Japan. The allegations include persecution, intimidation, blackmail, and threats, as well as promoting divisions among civil society groups that oppose ProSAVANA and agribusiness related projects in Mozambique (Investigation Report, 2017). Whilst Japan has no official part in the new MoU between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB concerning the Nacala Corridor and most current Japanese development interventions are no longer officially classified as part of ProSAVANA, Japanese corporations continue to invest, alongside the Brazilian mining company Vale Moçambique, in the infrastructure that will make the Nacala Corridor an attractive agricultural powerhouse (Shankland and Gonçalvez, 2016).

Further to this, the Japanese and Mozambican governments have now launched the ambitious new Project for Economic Development Strategies, which aims to promote integrated development strategies across five provinces in Mozambique (Shankland and Gonçalves, 2016) – three of them from the Nacala Corridor.

This division of agribusiness projects in the Corridor has made it possible to deny that land conflicts – such as that involving a large soybean farm in Zambézia that is part-owned by the Brazilian agribusiness firm Grupo Pinesso (Shankland and Gonçalves, 2016) – are linked to contentious ProSAVANA and related agribusiness projects such as the ones mentioned in the new MoU. In this way, the role of, and responsibility for, transnational capital in the Corridor has been rendered less visible – and thus less subject to demands for public accountability – by being edited out of the official version of what development agribusiness projects in the Nacala Corridor represent. In that sense, the MoU between Brazil, Mozambique, and the WB has not been translated into changes in the logic of broader governmental and corporate plans for the Nacala Corridor, nor has it meant more effective inclusion of civil society organisations and communities, despite the assurances of its

stated commitment. Neither is there any official response regarding accountability and responsibility for the several human rights violations and other claims from the communities, peasants, and civil society organisations affected by these projects. This both constitutes and reinforces what might be referred to as an architecture of corporate impunity.

The Architecture of Corporate Impunity

On the 26th of June 2014, the UN Human Rights Council adopted resolution 26/9, by which it decided

> to establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, whose mandate shall be to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018: 1)

However, the United States (US) – largest shareholder and with most voting power in the WB (WB, 2018)[55] – did not recognise the vote, nor did it participate in the UN working groups. Instead the US positioned itself against the resolution, saying that the otherwise binding treaty would not be binding for those who voted against it. Whilst the European Union (EU) did decide to participate in the UN working group, its primary role has been one of obstructing the process through the use of delaying tactics and attempts to lower the mandate of the resolution, substantially modify its purpose, and even to terminate the treaty-making process altogether (González, Hernández and Ramiro, 2018). Countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Australia, and Chile adopted the EU's argument in a literal way. In a similar way, the role of the UN has been one – jointly with the EU – of blocking the debate by creating long bureaucratic processes, questioning the ambiguity of the texts, and raising further questions regarding the processes used and the different forms in which the resolution might be interpreted (González, Hernández and Ramiro, 2018; Pérez, 2017). This comes as no surprise, given the increasingly corporatisation of the UN during recent years. All of these factors

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[55] "Member countries are allocated votes at the time of membership and subsequently for additional subscriptions to capital" (one vote for each share of capital stock held by the member) (WB, 2018: 1).

support an architecture of corporate impunity that puts the private benefit of a small minority before the general interest of social majorities. This mechanism creates a global corporate law in which transnational corporations get rights with reduced obligations that are limited to national legislation – increasingly linked to neoliberal logic – and protected by weak international regulations on human and labour rights (Plaza and Romiro, 2016), as well as on protecting the planet. In this sense, a new regulatory international framework and alternative proposals that place the rights of people and nature at least at the same level as those of transnational corporations is urgently needed.

Bilateral and multilateral donors – and the WB in particular – remain silent in global discussions regarding the accountability and responsibility of transnational corporations. However, corporate influence is manifested in and through the WB (Inclusive Development International [IDI], 2017). Over the past six years, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the WB, has channelled over $50bn to the financial sector, and its long-term investments in financial intermediaries (FI) such as commercial banks and private equity funds have risen dramatically (by 45 percent) over that same period (OXFAM, 2016). The WB-IFC has also provided direct financial support for

corporations wishing to develop large-scale industrial plantations, including "some of the most notorious land grabs on the [African] continent" (IDI, 2017: 8) – notably in the Nacala Corridor. As reported by IDI (2017) and OXFAM (2016), amongst others, much of the WB-IFC's investments in FIs are not actually going to small businesses run by local entrepreneurs that would otherwise lack access to finance, as claimed by the Brazil-Mozambique-WB SSTC MoU. Instead, substantial investments are going to large corporations that own and operate major high-risk investment projects, including mega-dams, industrial monocrop plantations, bauxite, coal and other mines, and other large-scale commercial developments. The IDI (2017) highlight numerous cases in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that show that high-risk, harmful investments are, in fact, a common feature of the WB-IFC's FI portfolio and cannot be regarded as mere anomalies. So far, the issue of whether (or not) the WB will be covered by international legally binding instruments designed to regulate the activities of transnational organisations has not been discussed in the UN working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, and thus the WB's responsability remains – once again – hidden.

One of the factors highlighted by communities and civil society organisations concerning agribusiness development projects in the Nacala Corridor has been the secrecy of the agencies responsible for the projects, and the lack of information they provide (People's Declaration, 2017; Shankland and Gonçalves, 2016). Confidentiality and privacy regulations prohibiting the disclosure of investments is one of several arguments used by the WB to explain why it cannot make its portfolio more transparent and accountable (OXFAM, 2016). However, these types of excuses sound increasingly frail, as ever more cases emerge in which local communities have been forcibly displaced, their people impoverished, and forests and rivers ravaged by projects financed by WB-IFC's FI clients (OXFAM 2016; see also IDI 2017; Human Rights Watch 2014, OXFAM 2012). These widespread and serious forms of violence show that the WB-IFC and its clients are not fulfilling the promise on which its sustainable development model is predicated: that the WB's financial sector investments will not simply be profitable, but also responsible and sustainable – and that they will respect local communities and the environment. Since the WB-IFC does not publicly disclose the end use of such funds, it can frame deals in terms of job creation and poverty reduction (OXFAM, 2016) when in reality the funds often flow to projects that actually undermine these goals. Furthermore, increasing evidence shows that the WB has little control over how a great deal of this money

is spent (see OXFAM, 2016). This lack of accountability is having a devastating impact on many impoverished communities and people. As the WB's stated goals are to end poverty and promote shared prosperity and well-being, it would be fitting for the WB, alongside its financial sector clients, to start taking more responsibility for these outcomes and to ensure that its investments are benefitting, rather than harming, people, their communities, and the environment.

IV.   THE CAPITAL VERSUS LIFE CONFLICT

The SSTC solidarity approach is framed within a common destiny: "the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UNOSCC, 2018: 1) Yet, what needs to be sustained in sustainable development (Carrasco-Miró, 2017)? It becomes apparent that the food crisis, the environmental crisis, the energy crisis, financial speculation on commodities and natural resources, the appropriation and consolidation of land, the disorderly expansion of agricultural frontiers, the voracity of the exploitation of natural resources, the shortage and privatisation of

water for drinking and other uses, violence in the countryside, the expulsion of populations from their ancestral lands to clear the way for large infrastructure projects, the diseases induced by a degraded environment, etc., are increasingly articulated by, and are manifestations of, the same crisis which, due to its scale and breadth, is presented as a "civilisatory crisis" (Pérez, 2014: 22, translation mine; see also Klein, 2014; Pérez, 2017). It has been argued by feminist economics that sustainable development claims and projects that aim to reconcile the sustainability of the planet with economic growth are based on a structural and unsolvable conflict between capital and life – even if the UN and the WB, amongst other multilateral and bilateral donors, might try to argue otherwise (Carrasco-Miró, 2017, 2018; Pérez, 2017). Either the process of accumulation of capital is guaranteed, *or* the process of sustainability of life is guaranteed.

Life is not something abstract; rather, life is the life of the planet, and it is the life of the people. Nor is capital something abstract – there are concrete structures and specific people behind it. Yet, the critical role played by nation-states, development organisations, and IFIs as the main actors of mediation in this capital-life conflict – now realised through the SSTC development modality – finally ends up drifting towards the

inhibition of the existence of a collective responsibility for the sustainability of life – a responsibility that they claim to support. As shown in the previous sections, these players support instead a set of structures and mechanisms by which transnational corporations have the power to impose their interests globally upon, and in conflict with, life in its entirety (see, for example, People's Declaration, 2017). Thus, development's understanding of life is, in fact, a direct contradiction to life itself. Ultimately, development is a field absolutely permeated by power relations, and SSTC is equally implicated in this dynamic. Specific elites who possess certain capital can turn their lives into those worthy of being lived, whilst the lives of the majority remain confined to the terrain of the "left behind". This tension between prioritising the lives of only a few subjects on the one hand, and turning life in a multidimensional and collective sense into the primary and ultimate objective on the other, represents the pre-eminent dispute currently on the development aid table – a dynamic that has been in effect since the financial crisis in 2007–2008.

The global economic and political transformations of the last decade in the field of international development and aid can be read as an intensification of the capital-life conflict in three ways. Firstly, via the physical, ontological, and epistemological

invasion and occupation of territories, communities, and their people by the global expansion and accumulation of capital. This includes the appropriation and privatisation of collective life, the destruction of subsistence and (non-) post-capitalist economies, and the annihilation of the knowledges and cultures of these populations and their manner of relating – both to others and to nature. Legal, economic, and political forms are destroyed and subordinated by colonial occupation. Secondly, via the commodification of life (Pérez, 2014, 2017), which implies a growing penetration by market forces as the logic of capital accumulation with extractivism and neo-extractivism, and with new investment and trade treaties exercised under different modalities, including the SSTC – a process that takes place within all aspects of life, including nature. Finally, the financialisation of the economy, which has caused the cycle of financial valorisation to be imposed upon the wider cycles of capital. Markets lie at the centre of this conflict and this means that a system with the collective responsibility of taking care of life does not, and cannot, exist in the current development framework. At the same time, the present conflict between capital and life cannot be reduced to a better or worse regulation of the markets or "greenwashing" development policies and agendas (e.g. green and/or inclusive economic growth or green markets) (Carrasco-Miró, 2017). Rather, it encompasses entire socio-economic

structures and, in a broader sense, the whole modernising development project.

Hence, the capital-life conflict has become more visible and stark than ever, despite the fact that development narratives and strategies camouflage it under "new partnerships" or SSTC. It is therefore crucial to think life from life itself. This opens up an almost infinite number of questions that defy reduction to the question of how to create more jobs. In other words, well-being (or the contrary) is a multidimensional and complex experience that is not understood only through the question of access to salary. Affirming this is not an obstacle to recognise that inhabiting the current development framework (i.e. capitalism) forces us to face the question of how that life becomes part of the processes of valorisation and how, in turn, it intervenes in defining or conditioning vital processes (as it conditions one's understanding of a life that is worth living). Yet, what are, if any, the alternatives to the current development framework? Where to direct them? Is it possible to imagine solidarity otherwise?

V. FINAL REMARKS: DECOLONISING SOLIDARITY

Solidarity should be directed towards decolonisation. This means "constructing the conditions for a different kind of encounter that both opposes ongoing colonisation and seeks to heal the social, cultural, and spiritual ravages of colonial history" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, 42). This call requires abandoning development's solidarity approach – one based on similarity, rational calculation of self-interest, or "mutual benefits" and sustainable development (i.e. economic growth and modernism) – as a common destiny. It also requires moving beyond essentialising identifications that have significant – and often negative – political consequences. It means acknowledging that development is itself a site for the production of difference and not simply a point of reception and mediation through which multiple cultures are brought into contact with each other. In this sense, decolonising solidarity opposes development's expressions of solidarity that largely work to exculpate, exonerate, or ignore complicity in ongoing colonisation and racism, thus deepening inequalities and reinforcing injustice. In other words, decolonising solidarity entails rejecting a project that attacks life.

Decolonising solidarity is about the politics of (re-) imagining the future. Particularly, solidarity in relationship to decolonisation is about centring the sustainability of life, and by extension, building a world that is not based on exclusion. It is, therefore, about understanding life as premised on the relationship between *difference* and *interdependency*, rather than similarity and the rational calculation of self-interests. Since life is at the centre of the dispute, it is from the sustainability of life that resistances and solidarities should be organised. This enables democratisation and sustains solidarities. Whilst committed in principle to the sustainability of life, solidarities in their relationship with decolonisation cannot determine a priori what kinds of claims are relevant to a given instance – as in the taken for granted assertion of Brazilian cooperation in Africa that "for every African problem there is a Brazilian solution" – because such claims depend on the particularities and complexities of local desires and needs (see Tuck, 2009). Cabral et al. (2016) claim that for Brazil, the deep commitment and political solidarity among many Brazilian experts combines with a lack of understanding and failure to engage with local realities in Mozambique. Thus, it is necessary to understand how the politics of imagining the future and solidarity are infected by their context and what sort of contextual

knowledge is needed for those wishing to come to grips with the politics of solidarity in different contexts. This requires a turn towards a different set of terms for engaging across differences that do not carry development's vacant language, nor its Western-centric and capitalist focus.

As a contribution to the ongoing feminist debates about decolonising solidarity in the age of neoliberalism (see Mohanty, 2017), I propose here two possible decolonising parameters for articulating solidarity from the sustainability of life. The first one is to understand the current re-articulation of the modernist development project from its colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal dimensions. Starting from the sustainability of life allows us both to acknowledge that the intensification of violence and its multiple forms (corporative, patriarchal, colonial, etc.) lie at the centre of the dispute today, and to trace the links between them. Secondly, alternatives to the current unjust global economic system – rooted in territories and centred around the sustainability of life – already exist, and many more are emerging. Yet, this has to be combined with solidarity strategies that articulate these territorialised economies and look for alternative forms to the Western and capitalist conceptions of regional integration developments. Hence, at stake is both a concrete break with the

current developmentalist and extractivist models of aid cooperation that attack life, and a new pattern of international cooperation – a cooperation in partnership with decolonisation that places the sustainability of life firmly at its centre.

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AFTERWORD: A SIGNPOST TO THE FUTURE

I worked in the development sector, particularly for the United Nations as a Gender Advisor and Programme Specialist for over nine years in Central America, Mozambique and Geneva. During that time, I had come across a number of situations regarding the policy and practice of development that were initially frustrating, but later became a source of interest that I wanted to explore in my PhD research. As a feminist, I had arrived to the position with great respect for the organisation, particularly UNIFEM (now UN WOMEN), but after some time the patina of its reputation as an international leader on development, gender and women's empowerment had worn off. I had come to realise there were different, sometimes contentious, understandings about development's buzzwords, including 'gender', 'development', 'women's empowerment', 'nature', 'solidarity', amongst many others. Yet, they were treated under the politics of development[56], which often attempts to hide or impose development's modernist

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[56] A set of actions and power relationships that impose a hegemonic understanding of development (see Kapoor, 2008).

claims and the contestation of such claims by a range of groups that often attempt to resist, publicly interrogate, or deflect them.

A common element in development discourses is that development always comes with the future promise of the possible and gives today's policies a sense of hope, purposefulness and optimism. The word development itself, swiss political scientist Gilbert Rist (2007) observes, has become a "modern shibboleth, an essential password" (487), which comes to be used to believe in "the idea that tomorrow things will be better, or that more is necessarily better" (485). Yet, the very taken-for-granted belief of development leaves much of what is actually *done* in its name unquestioned (Cornwall 2010) and *shrinks* the emancipatory political imagination failing to account for the multiple and diverse forms of struggle, living, social actors, and grammars of liberation that have been established around the world. It was this taken-for-grantedness of development itself and its assumed inevitable route of the only possible future that became the impetus for this research.

This dissertation has been a writing in progress. In that sense, it draws on my own experiences and reflections before and during the research. My feminist involvement, my interactions and discussions with and consideration of the challenges made by Indigenous, Muslim and African female leaders and communities, has generated questions and led to the writing of this dissertation about decolonising knowledge and suggesting some proposals for decolonising the current sustainable development discourse, feminist development economics, religion in feminist theory and solidarity. Yet, a key preoccupation for me in researching about decolonising knowledge is to consider the implications of attempting it as a white, non-Indigenous person, some of the implications which I have discussed in Articles 3 and 4. Being a white researcher who studies decolonising knowledge has provoked many questions for me. The challenges issued by non-white people, activists, scholars and thinkers about the way whiteness and racism impacts on peoples of the South, as well as how white lives are racialized demand a response. I propose here two open questions for further reflection: Can one write a dissertation, a feminist one, that is non-extractivist? Is this possible given the absolute hegemony of cognitive extraction in Western academia? I do not have an answer to these questions. Decolonising knowledge calls not just for new methodologies, non-extractive methodologies, but also for new ontologies and epistemologies (Escobar 2016; Santos

2014, 2017). It is problematic whether the still dominant canons of Western scholarship, within which this thesis is imbedded, will allow for the methodological innovation and transformation called for by the project of decolonising knowledge. Yet, I would like to contribute to this necessary and important discussion, especially in feminist academic circles, by providing the following reflection about my own work.

As follows, I suggest the need of embracing "enabling contradictions" (Santos 2014) in order to think about social change today. Drawing upon some fragments from the book *Voices from Chernobyl* by Svetlana Alexievich, the last subsection of this afterword proposes the art of establishing limits to both disrupt the current development agenda and its goals and open up possibilities to think a world different from capitalism, that is, affirming the possibility of another, a better future.

- **Contradictions**

Writing a theoretical dissertation about decolonising knowledge and writing it in a colonial language, seems to amount to a contradiction. Yet, I agree with Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) that "the fertility of a contradiction does not lie in imagining ways of escaping it but rather in ways of working with and through it. If the time of paradigmatic transition has a name, it is certainly that of enabling contradictions" (371). In that sense, enabling contradictions not as problems but as a fundamental part of thinking allows us to recognize the limits of thought in a given context and refuses to view these contradictions at a distance or with veneration – that is, without becoming either ethnocentric or relativist. The enabling contradictions and dilemmas called for in this dissertation have been of two types. On the one hand, negotiating different ways of knowing call for new concepts, terminology and purposes of epistemological, social and political transformation, to offer a different social and economic ethics. However, the need to decolonising struggles and solidarities may call for some kind of epistemological and cultural hybridity – deep cultural mixing over time – (Bhabha 1996; Zein-Elabdin 2009) situated in intersections of multiple currents of cultural interaction whether at the level of local communities, or at a global trans-continental scale, both as concerns what is to be done with whom and how to name it. In that sense, by bringing to the fore the narratives of how communities live in the present may allow these narratives

to hybridize the authority of current hegemonic representations such as development/underdevelopment, modern/traditional and secular/religion thereby displacing antagonism in such a way that it stops sustaining the pure modernist polarizations that made it up. I deal with politics of articulation in Articles 3 and 4 and decolonising solidarity in Article 5 as a way of achieving new hybrid forms of cultural and economic understanding without compromising the political and cultural identity of the different solidarities and social actors involved. I suggest, therefore, that the project of decolonising is a necessary and critical outlook capable of illuminating the complexity of today's world, interrogating hegemony, and restoring agency to the people of the Global South as well as giving trust to the re-existence, resistance and validation of silenced knowledges.

On the other hand, a total investment in the present demand seeking alternatives beyond this very civilization focused on economic growth, on instrumental and destructive societal relations with nature, and on a rational, profit-maximizing, and individualistic understanding of humanity, that capitalist modernity has shaped and led us into this crisis (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kiallis 2015). Yet, any analysis that seeks to underscore and evaluate the emancipatory potential of economic proposals taking

place worldwide, as this dissertation does, should take into account the fact that, because of their anti-systemic nature, these proposals are fragile and incipient. In that sense, I use a decolonising approach in my interpretation of the ways in which movements, projects and communities resist global capitalism and pursue economic initiatives and forms of solidarity that embody alternative social arrangements and moral assessments. The emancipatory features of these alternatives are thus underscored throughout the Articles to give them greater visibility and credibility. Yet, this does not mean, that the analysis provided fails to rigorously and critically analyse the alternatives studied. It simply means that the aim of my analysis and criticism is to strengthen, rather than weaken, their potential.

Concurrently, knowledges of the Global South and non/post-capitalist alternatives engage with Western-centric conceptions, capitalism and modernist political instruments, be they women's empowerment, human rights, or development, in order to design and carry out counter-hegemonic uses of such notions and instruments. Thus, such notions may be thought as strange encounters (Ahmed 2000) but not complete strangers, since "the struggles against them are also struggles with them" (Santos 2014, 239). They are, I believe, hybrids of strangeness and

familiarity (Ahmed 2000; Nagar 2014; Santos 2014) originated from a better understanding of shared risks and shared possibilities on the grounds of more *mestiza* (Santos 2014; see Anzaldúa 1987), but no less genuine, identities. Here it is where I am interested in situating the debate: not wanting to fall into the trap of formulating sociological or policing questions about the 'new strangers' or 'subalterns' (who are they?). To try to identify 'subalterns', but to situate ourselves precisely where the question 'who are they?' stops working. What happens then? What possibilities may this open? What contradictions? What does it mean to be, to exist, today in the world? The decolonising project discussed in this dissertation seeks for other answers than the hegemonic ones (e.g. capitalist modernity, liberal discourses on multiculturalism) to what it means to be in the world today. The Articles investigate these other answers and address the problems, contradictions, dilemmas, horizons, difficulties and ways to go that open when we are ready to learn, to imagine, our world differently instead of remaining tied to capitalist modernity as the only possible way of life.

- **Signpost to the future**

The book of journalist and writer Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl* has accompanied me during my research, and contains several paragraphs that deserve to be reproduced here in full, as, I believe, they speak the truth of our time[57]:

> I see Chernobyl as the beginning of a new history […] because it challenges our old ideas about ourselves and the world. When we talk about the past or the future, we read our ideas about time into those words; but Chernobyl is, above all, a catastrophe of time […].

> We were dazzled by infinity. The philosophers and writers fell silent, derailed from the familiar tracks of culture and tradition…

> In the space of one night we shifted to another place in history […], beyond not only our knowledge but also our imagination. Time was out of joint. The past suddenly

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[57] Fragments from "The author interviews herself on missing history and why Chernobyl calls our view of the world into question" in Alexievich (2016).

became impotent, it had nothing for us to draw on; in the all-encompassing – or so we'd believed – archive of humanity, we couldn't find a key to open this door […].

We now find ourselves on a new page of history. The history of disasters has begun… But people do not want reflect on that […], preferring to take refuge in the familiar. And in the past […].

What lingers most in my memory of Chernobyl is life afterwards: the possessions without owners, the landscapes without people. The roads going nowhere, the cables leading nowhere. You find yourself wondering just what this is: the past or the future.

[…] we have to follow the trail while it is still fresh.

Everything has changed, except us.

Alexievich states, in the fragments quoted above, that all that has been saved from the past is the knowledge that we know nothing.

Yet, not-knowing is quite the opposite of passive illiteracy. It is a counter-hegemonic gesture, a disobedience, towards the understanding and acceptance of the routes, codes, messages, and arguments of power. It is the wager of imagining another possible world. In our time, particularly in academic circles, not-knowing will require a laborious work of reflection of the limits of the world, of the possibilities those limits open and the demands they create for us (Santos 2014). Upon the ruins of the modernist project, it will mean, above all, assuming our time to be an unprecedented, transitional time in which we face, following Alexievich's words, a time out of joint. (The past suddenly became impotent, it had nothing for us to draw on (...) we couldn't find the key to open this door). Everything has changed, so *we must change*.

Globalisation has now disclosed its most terrible face. We live in global societies that are becoming increasingly more unjust and discriminatory. Colonialism, patriarchy, fetishism of commodities, the productivism of economic growth, developmentalism, precarization, food crisis, energy crisis, violence, the expulsion of populations from their ancestral lands, etc. For the first time in human history, capitalism is on the edge of touching the limits of the planet. Global capital has never been

so eager for natural resources as today. Land, water, oceans, air and minerals have never been so desirable, and the struggle for them has never had such devastating social, political, cultural and environmental consequences. Yet, in the same way that we know nothing about the limits of our world we can know in any case our own limits: the limits of the intolerable, the limits of dignity, the limits we can recognize and therefore indicate. This is, I believe, the fundamental critical capacity of decolonising knowledge and projects: the art of making the limits apparent (Garcés 2017b) and of drawing from them the moral, aesthetic, economic, ecological and political consequences of this possibility.

From this critical capacity, which is not only that of judging by only a hermeneutics of suspicion but that of generating trust, new, emancipatory values, where there is no longer room for mere reaction or hope. Establishing limits means beginning to struggle and commit ourselves. Only by the art of limits can possibilities be generated to disrupt the already established agenda of the possible in the current development framework and its global goals. Today, many peoples, communities and struggles around the world have decided to go against the tide by engaging in decolonising projects, demonstrating that it is possible to

conceive and implement alternatives to the established universal development agenda of the possible (i.e. capitalism). Interrupting whatever seems inevitable is, I believe, the direction that critical thought must follow today, if it proceeds from the reality of our present in order to continue and open up. Like a trail while it is still fresh, or a signpost – not a methodology, not an agenda, no goals, but a signpost to the future.

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