



# SYSTEM CHANGE BEFORE PLANETARY COLLAPSE: A FEMINIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE AND MACROECONOMICS

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DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES  
WITH WOMEN FOR A NEW ERA

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CBDR</b>	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Carbon dioxide
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>DDT</b>	Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane
<b>FfD</b>	Financing for Development
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
<b>GND</b>	Green New Deal
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>MDBs</b>	Multilateral Development Banks
<b>MOI</b>	Means of Implementation
<b>NCQG</b>	New Collective Quantifiable Climate Finance Goal
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PPM</b>	Parts per million
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

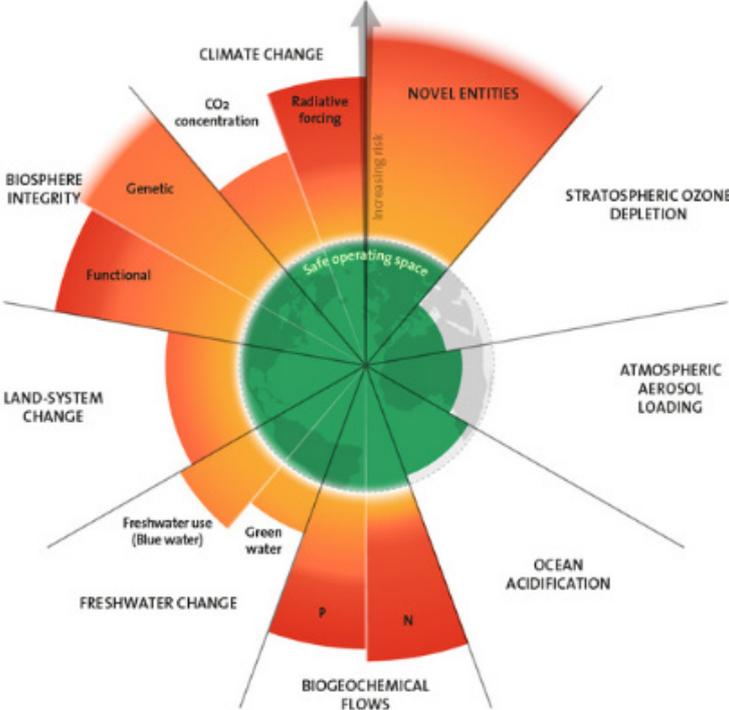
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article explores the profound ecological and social crises arising from the current economic paradigm, the central driver of environmental degradation and inequality. It raises awareness of the colonial and imperial logics behind “green capitalism” solutions being discussed in the development arena, which, with techno-fixes and financialised false solutions, perpetuate harmful systems rather than addressing root causes. The analysis adopts a feminist and global South perspective, integrating ecological integrity, economic justice, and systemic change and invites joint feminist reflexion to build system alternatives.

## ECOLOGICAL CRISES BEYOND CLIMATE CHANGE

The ecological crisis extends beyond the climate emergency to the overshooting of planetary boundaries. This framework, developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre<sup>1</sup> highlights interlinked global systems that ensure life’s sustainability.

**Graphic: planetary boundaries 2023\***



**Source:** Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Richardson et al 2023

\*During the period in which this paper was written and published, the seventh planetary boundary—ocean acidification—has been overshoot. Updated information [here](#). See also Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (2025).

Humanity has surpassed six of nine boundaries, risking systemic collapse. There are interrelated and interdependent processes which raise the risk; for example plastic pollution exacerbates climate change, biodiversity loss, and ocean acidification. As well, climate change and biodiversity integrity are cross-cutting and have a major added impact on the internal processes of all the other boundaries while also affecting each other. This shows that Planetary Boundaries cannot be considered in isolation in any decision making on sustainability. Only by respecting all nine boundaries can we maintain the safe survival space for human civilization. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change rather than isolated technical fixes.

## **COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL ROOTS OF EXPLOITATION AND FAILURES AND BETRAYALS OF CURRENT ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACHES**

A feminist approach to this issue underscores the historical colonial and imperial causes that facilitated resource exploitation, labour extraction, and ecological harm. Cases, such as Haiti's debt to France and Britain's drain of wealth from India, illustrate the long-standing plunder of global South countries. Meanwhile, contemporary financial systems perpetuate these dynamics through mechanisms like debt traps, unequal trade, and climate finance conditionalities. Since the Paris Agreement in 2015, established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), developed countries have been leveraging forced interpretations of signed agreements<sup>2</sup> to evade historical responsibilities and financial obligations to developing countries. This trend reinforces colonial and imperial imbalances in power. This bad-faith approach resulted in a disappointing outcome at the 2024 Conference of the Parties (COP) in Baku, Azerbaijan. The financial agreements reached were even less ambitious than those previously signed. The obligation of developed countries to provide climate finance to developing nations was undermined, major commitments for public finance were shifted away, and the scope of action for international financial institutions (IFIs) in developing countries was expanded. These actions betray the principles of justice and equity that are fundamental to multilateral frameworks.

Economic growth and profiteering as the only goal of the economic system remains a pervasive ideology, driving ecological harm and justifying violent practices of primitive accumulation. The focus on GDP as a measure of success obscures social and environmental costs such as the exploitation of women's unpaid labour and Indigenous communities' contributions to biodiversity. Solutions promoted by multilateral agreements, including the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, rely on false narratives of green growth and promote practices like carbon offsets and renewable energy projects that often reinforce colonial extraction.

The concepts of colonisation and appropriation emphasise the direct link between industrial carbon emissions and capital accumulation in the global North. These emissions affect not only land, energy, resources, labour and time, but also the atmospheric space (Fanning and Hickel, 2023).

Instead of transitioning from fossil fuels, global North economies are focused on excessive accumulation, expanding their energy base through renewable sources while engaging in intense extraction of raw materials. Plans for both fossil fuel and renewable projects continue, and the debate on deep-sea mining illustrates conflicting viewpoints, with the preservation of ocean ecosystems largely ignored.

Additionally, global North countries' refusal to pay for their environmental damage—often tied to green colonisation and imperialism—has resulted in destruction and worsened conditions for various species and ecosystems worldwide and the loss of lives.

There are also limits to the approach of promoting monetised agendas to solve non-monetary problems. While proposals like taxing polluters or introducing wealth taxes on billionaires are often framed as pathways to fund public services or climate action, they risk reinforcing market-based approaches without addressing the root causes of ecological harm. For instance, taxing polluters may create revenue but fail to directly regulate or limit the destructive activities that breach planetary boundaries. Similarly, wealth taxes, though necessary for redistributive justice, often overlook the broader systemic impacts of billionaires' consumption and extraction-driven enterprises. Same way, “green jobs” narratives fail to challenge exploitative labour practices in care work and resource extraction.

Finally, there is a need to warn about techno-fix solutions, such as geoengineering, due to their incalculable risks and inability to address systemic problems. Elite decision-makers are more willing to risk the life of the planet than possibly losing profits.

## **FEMINIST AND GLOBAL SOUTH ALTERNATIVES**

All debates presented so far apply either an anthropocentric or monetised approach to the materiality of life, or a siloed way of thinking about the many systems that operate in the economic, social, geopolitical and ecological spheres. There are, indeed, global South alternative visions and feminist alternatives that adds to the discourse and invite joint reflection to develop more encompassing solutions, guided by multiple and plural paradigms.

The feminist perspective, particularly rooted in the *Tradition of Rupture*,<sup>3</sup> calls for dismantling patriarchal capitalism and prioritising the sustainability of life, emphasising that Ecofeminism and Indigenous knowledge provide critical insights into rethinking economic systems.

There is a need to advocate for the Right to Development, emphasising sovereignty and self-sufficiency in the global South through planned, anti-extractivist transitions that respect planetary boundaries, and to call for moving from the colonial paradigm underpinning official development assistance today to the systemic reparations framework (Sylla et al, 2024) that addresses ecological and historical debts to rectify inequalities and support ecological justice. There are alternative strategies: i) degrowth in the global North to curb overconsumption and environmental harm; ii) paired with post-extractivist models for the global South; iii) and cross-movement alliances towards delinking from capitalism, imperialism and colonialism to build an equitable and sustainable future.

## **A CALL FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

Recognising the inevitability of systemic collapse, we emphasise the need for collective agency in shaping the collapse of the current capitalistic, colonial, imperial system of unequal exchange, which is exploitative of people, rather than the collapse of the planet. We stress the need to frame solutions around the primacy of life over capital, rejecting exploitative practices in favour of care, solidarity, and ecological balance.

In conclusion, the current multilateral frameworks and economic systems are inadequate to address the scale of ecological and social crises. Instead, by balancing individual rights with collective well-being through expanding the interpretation of the Human Rights framework, we advocate for strategies that prioritise sustainable livelihoods, foster resilience, and strengthen marginalised groups to take part in co-creating systemic change. This requires collective action, rooted in feminist, anti-colonial, anti-imperial and global South perspectives, to redefine development and build futures worth living for.

# INTRODUCTION

This paper dwells on the ecological impacts of current economic dynamics. The ecological crisis goes beyond the climate emergency, given the dire situation of overshooting more than half of the planetary boundaries (see Section Two). This overshooting is due to the current economic system, which is exploitative, extractive, and prioritises monopoly capital over life. The so-called solutions devised in the multilateral arena, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda or the Paris Agreement, rely on the false solutions and dangerous distractions included in the framework of green capitalism and green imperialism. They do not question the roots of the economic system. At the heart of the matter is what feminists call the tension between “capital versus life” and the threat posed to the sustainability of life in this economic capitalist system. Some alternative proposals are suggested at the end of the paper as a way forward, centring principles of justice, equality and wellbeing for people and the planet.

In parallel, this paper provides an overview of the most common debates around the ecological integrity and economic justice agenda globally given its relevance for the feminist movement. Each debate is complex, so this list cannot be considered exhaustive. However, it is useful to present the debates together to map our vision from the global South, rather than just limiting ourselves to adjusting our demands to the calendar imposed by the multilateral system.

# 1. THE ECOLOGICAL CRISES AND THE ROLE OF COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL CAPITALISM

As humanity grapples with understanding the extent of the current ecological harm and the measures needed to address it, it is becoming clearer that the economic system is at the heart of this grave situation, and technical solutions in the “environmental” field are not enough to reverse the harms. We need a system change instead of maintaining the current paradigm. What has been presented to us as a series of sectoral problems that can be tackled with specific techno-fixes (i.e. related to energy provision, transportation challenges or even ecosystem conservation), has rather to be seen in the light of a predatorial and extractivist economic logic that is leading the world to ecocidal consequences at a massive scale. In pursuing growthist dynamics,<sup>4</sup> the global elites are sacrificing everything we hold dear and beyond: the ways of life on the planet as we knew it may disappear due to this insane economic drive based on profit and wealth accumulation.

Experts in the ecological economy field have documented well the ecological harm driven by the capitalist and neoliberal system.<sup>5</sup> Practices of extractive and destructive production are the current paradigm now, and these have been naturalised everywhere, as if exploitation were the natural form in which humans can relate and co-exist economically. In the last six years, humanity has consumed over 75 per cent of what it did in the entire twentieth century (Circle Economy Foundation, 2024). Furthermore, examples from the ground abound, with environmentalists and frontline defenders denouncing thousands of violent and bloodied cases of land grabbing, enclosure, dispossession and displacement, destruction of entire ecosystems and livelihoods, all in the name of economic growth and wealth accumulation. For instance, the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice currently documents 4,206 cases of environmental conflicts; however, the absence of data does not necessarily indicate the absence of conflict (EJATLAS, n.d.).

Economic growth has proven to be a pervasive and negative ideology that permeates most of today’s economic decisions. In economics, economic growth would be presented as a premise, a point of departure and arrival, a law of “nature” that drives material and social human relations above everything else. Importantly, over the past decades, many traditions of thought have shown how economic growth is nothing

more than an ideology (like fascism),<sup>6</sup> one that can be confronted and evidenced in its bases and, therefore, can also be dismantled.

And yet, economic growth is set as a goal and the driver of every economic and political decision, with economists, major financial institutions and international entities pontificating how Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is “the” measure around which countries need to centre their attention. Numerous authors, including Waring (1999), Schmelzer (2015), and Kallis et al. (2018), have exhaustively analysed how GDP is a measure that misrepresents wellbeing, access to services, and ecological integrity. It even legitimises sectors and measures that are objectively and scientifically negative for the wellbeing of people and the health of the planet (such as the military-industrial complex, or the indiscriminate extraction of fossil fuels). Applying a feminist point of view, GDP allows for the exploitation of women and renders invisible the relevance of the social reproduction dimension. It is also misleading when assigning value to and dismissing as irrelevant a plurality of world visions, such as those upheld by Indigenous Peoples, which do not prioritise a monetised logic.

## **BOX1 MONETISATION**

“...refers to the process of turning a non-revenue-generating item into cash. In many cases, monetization looks to novel methods of creating income from new sources ... Sometimes, monetization is due to privatization (called commodification), whereby a previously free or public asset is turned into a profit center—such as a public road being converted into a private tollway.

The term “monetize” may also refer to liquidating an asset or object for cash.

... Governments monetize debt to keep interest rates on borrowed money low. Though, if the need should arise, they may also do so to avoid a financial crisis while businesses monetize products and services to generate profit.”

(Ganti, 2024)

Deep in the heart of the capitalist system (currently dominated by financialisation and the financial sector, with a huge role and impact of private equity)<sup>7</sup> lies a colonial and imperial project that facilitates the exploitation of resources, energy, land, labour and time. The colonial and imperial projects have targeted, drained and exploited specific

territories and populations. Capitalism is not the process by which competition drives ingenuity, spiking productivity and gains. Capitalism is driven by exploitation and violence, taking for granted the extraction and disposal of elements of nature, and the labour and time of entire populations. This process of “primitive extraction” reclaims the notion of value at the centre of the material process of transforming goods. Unlike the concept of “externalisation”, in which ecological or social impacts are intentionally left aside when considering economic processes, primitive accumulation reminds us of permanent theft. The notion of primitive extraction or primitive accumulation includes a) the theft that is carried out in the ecological realm, b) the unrecognised labour of women, which is also exploited, and c) exploitation carried out in the global South. “Patriarchal capitalism is thus made possible and can only continue through the exploitation of free and invisible ‘colonies’: housework that reproduces labour power, the ‘free’ work of subsistence farmers and people working in the so-called informal economy, and ‘free’ goods provided by nature and developing countries” (Gregoratti and Raphael, 2019: 88-89). Moreover, the historical process of colonial extraction has been reviewed under a new light in the current era, with obscene estimations of how much wealth, resources and priceless lives were taken at the expense of colonial oppression.

Haiti is a paradigmatic case, with illegitimate debt payments to France, just for obtaining its independence in 1804. Haiti was condemned to pay a debt to the slave owners and had to get a loan from the French bank, which meant a double debt with interest rates. Conservative estimates are that the debt amounted to about USD560 million dollars. If we consider the lost growth rates of neighbouring countries, just in the first decades of existence, there may be a USD115 billion loss for Haiti. In 1914, the US Marines stole a further USD500,000 in gold (Gamio et al., 2022). Non-monetary losses should also be considered for the barbaric looting by France and the US in Haiti. The case of India is also an example of the looting; between 1765 and 1938, Britain drained an estimated GBP9.2 trillion, or USD45 trillion in current value (Sylla et al., 2024). The post-colonial financial drain is also astounding; since 1960, the global North has appropriated from the South an estimated USD62 trillion (constant 2011 dollars), or USD152 trillion when accounting for lost growth (Hickel et al., 2021).

## **2. OVERSHOOTING PLANETARY BOUNDARIES AND THE NEED TO REACH SAFE THRESHOLDS**

A step towards recognising the extent of ecological harm and its interconnections with the capitalist system in a colonial and imperial setting is to see it through a systemic lens. Although there is a generalised misconception that the ecological harm we are witnessing is caused by “climate change”, fragile ecological integrity relies on a complex web of systems. This is why the framing of “planetary boundaries” is more helpful and accurate.

The Stockholm Resilience Centre (2023) developed and updated the planetary boundaries framework in relation to the latest events globally. Based on this framework, nine interconnected planetary boundaries, each with specific characteristics, systems and internal processes, also influence each other. These are:

- 1. Climate change**
- 2. Biosphere integrity, also called biodiversity integrity/loss, which includes two dimensions: genetic diversity (prevalence/extinction of species and functional diversity (ecosystems integrity)**
- 3. Land-system change (related to forests)**
- 4. Biochemical flows (previously termed nitrogen/phosphorus cycles)**
- 5. Novel entities (related to chemical pollution, including plastic)**
- 6. Ocean acidification**
- 7. Freshwater use**
- 8. Atmospheric aerosol loading**
- 9. Stratospheric ozone depletion.**

## BOX 2

### THE NINE PLANETARY BOUNDARIES: A CLOSER LOOK

The Planetary Boundaries Framework (last updated in 2015) defines nine key Earth System processes and sets safe boundaries for human activities.

**Climate change:** Rising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are leading to increasing global temperatures. We passed the safe boundary of 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)<sup>8</sup> in 1988. By 2020, levels were 417ppm.

**Novel entities:** One of the more elusive planetary boundaries, novel entities refer to harmful chemicals, materials, and other new substances (such as plastics), as well as naturally occurring substances such as heavy metals and radioactive materials released by human activities. We release tens of thousands of synthetic substances into the environment every day, often with unknown effects. These risks are exemplified by the danger posed by Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)<sup>9</sup> to the ozone layer, or of Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT)<sup>10</sup> to biodiversity.

**Stratospheric ozone depletion:** The depletion of Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>)<sup>11</sup> in the stratosphere because of chemical pollutants was first discovered in the 1980s and led to the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (UNEP, 1987). The ozone layer is now showing signs of recovery.

**Atmospheric aerosols:** Atmospheric aerosol pollution is a bane to human health and can also influence air and ocean circulation systems that affect the climate. For example, severe aerosol pollution over the Indian subcontinent may cause the monsoon system to abruptly switch to a drier state.

**Ocean acidification:** Rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels are increasing the acidity of the world's oceans, posing a severe risk to marine biodiversity and particularly invertebrates whose shells dissolve in acidic waters.

**Biogeochemical flows:** We have profoundly altered the planet's natural nitrogen and phosphorus cycles by applying these vital nutrients in large quantities to agricultural land, leading to runoff into neighboring ecosystems.

**Freshwater use:** Agriculture, industry and a growing global population are putting ever greater strain on the freshwater cycle, while climate change is altering weather patterns, causing drought in some regions and flooding in others.

**Land-system change:** Changes in land-use, particularly the conversion of tropical forests to farmland, have a major effect on climate because of the impact on atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, on biodiversity, freshwater, and the reflectivity of the Earth's surface.

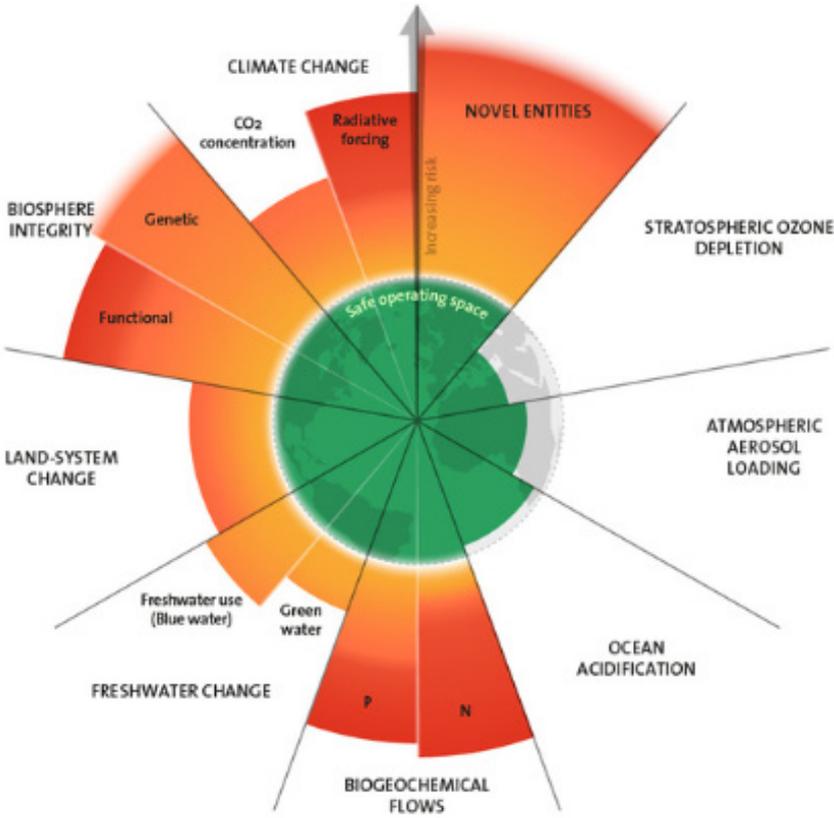
**Biosphere Integrity:** The functional integrity of ecosystems is a core planetary boundary because of the many ecosystem services they provide, from pollination to clean air and water. Scientists are concerned about rapid declines in plant and animal populations, the degradation of ecosystems, and the loss of genetic diversity which could disrupt essential biosphere services.

Explanations courtesy of J. Lokrantz/Azote based on Steffen et al. (2015) via Stockholm Resilience Centre (Asher, 2021).

The boundaries interact with each other, with significant implications. For instance, plastic pollution is changing the processes of the entire Earth system, increasing climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, freshwater use, and land use (Laville, 2024). Furthermore, two planetary boundaries, climate change and biodiversity integrity, are cross-cutting and have a major impact on the internal processes of the other boundaries.

**Graphic 1** presents an integrated view of the nine planetary boundaries, each having its own internal conditions for stability and thriving. The notion of planetary boundaries refers to a finite planet in the sense that resources are finite in material terms. It also refers to the speed of the current economic system's extractive and predatory activity, which means there is not enough time for ecosystems to regenerate. Planetary boundaries also represent the idea of the planet's own internal systems having dynamics that make possible the safe reproduction of life within ecological cycles. When the "boundaries" or safe zones are crossed, there is no assurance of maintaining the internal cycles, or even the "survival" of ecological integrity. This is where it is helpful to think of tipping points, or points of no return, in which the more we deviate from the safe zones of the regular functioning of these systems, the more uncertainty is faced and the more likelihood of the collapse of those systems. Surpassing all planetary boundaries means crossing the safe zones, which will likely lead to a point of global collapse.

**Graphic: planetary boundaries 2023\***



**Source:** Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University (2023). Based on Richardson et al. (2023). Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

Already, scientists are warning that “a rapidly increasing number of species of plants and animals face the threat of losing their natural habitats to inhospitable heat and the growing footprint of human industry and agriculture” (Tigue, 2022). Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and a pioneer in the Planetary Boundaries framework, estimates we are already in the midst of a global mass extinction, while also surpassing the ceiling of the biophysical coping capacity of the whole Earth System (Asher, 2021). Based on current trends, some estimations indicate that this collapse is as close as 2035, whereas the more conservative ones suggest 2080. These estimations can be linked to the notion of tipping points, which, if exceeded, could push a system into an entirely new state” (Tandon, 2023). We are at risk of crossing five of these critical thresholds, and three more are threatened by the 2030s, especially if our yearly average temperature exceeds the pre-industrial temperature by 1.5°C. In 2025, the 1.5°C temperature level was surpassed only on some days so there is still room for action to avoid this overall increase<sup>12</sup>

\*During the period in which this paper was written and published, the seventh planetary boundary—ocean acidification—has been overshoot. Updated information [here](#). See also Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (2025).

Although we are indeed facing a climate emergency, what makes the current situation more dire is that we have effectively surpassed six out of nine planetary boundaries, going well above the safe zones. Since climate change is a cross-cutting boundary, surpassing its safe zone would also detonate a chain reaction to destabilise the other boundaries even more. The biodiversity integrity boundary has been surpassed on a tragic scale, already threatening to destabilise the weak web that holds our ecological integrity together.

The ozone layer planetary boundary brings us a glimmer of hope. As mentioned above, it had been surpassed in the 1980s but was driven back to a safe zone by global efforts through the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (UNEP, 1987). This means that with concrete and collective action, we can return to the safe zones of these planetary boundaries. However, many of the negative effects (such as the extinction of species) are now irreversible.

This crisis also means we cannot just be driven by the discursive trends and expect that only “climate action” will solve humanity’s problems. The extent of the ecological harm clearly shows that siloed measures will not be enough. Moreover, given that the economic system is driving this ecocide, there is no solution but to seek a system change.

Why does finding clues to a real system change seem so difficult? At the heart of the matter is that the imposed solutions are driving more harm. That is mostly because the mainstream paradigm is still subject to the logics of a monetised economy driven by the principles of profit accumulation, protecting the interests of monopoly capital.<sup>13</sup> For instance, now that the economic system has been linked to ecological harm, we hear more and more that we need “green solutions”, without a deeper understanding of what it means to promote the sound economic dynamics needed to maintain ecological integrity. Without having a deep understanding of how the logics of monopoly capital are still driving the main economic decisions, even some of the economic justice movement demands are caught up in orthodox economic dynamics that are harmful for the planet.

Therefore, exploring the key debates related to the ecological integrity agenda and the economic paradigm is extremely useful. We need to continue emphasising the planetary boundaries framing across these debates, although many debates occur primarily within the field of the “climate emergency”. We need to establish the larger connections, and understand that by limiting the discussion, we would be exposed to the dangers of climate coloniality, and the limitations of the growthist paradigm

driving the sustainable development agenda. These debates refer to different actors at play and therefore different points of entry but are important to keep in mind to help us advance further in our collective decision-making.

### **3. DECONSTRUCTING THE KEY MYTHS, NARRATIVES AND DEBATES**

This section presents the key myths, narratives and debates about the dimension of the current economic paradigm and its impacts on ecological integrity. It exposes the arguments grounded in economic orthodoxy or the status quo, while also evidencing their limitations and negative effects. In some cases, the debates and arguments not only occur within spaces of liberal and neoliberal economic thinking, but also within social movements that remain confined to the logic of a monetised economy, or a development paradigm that still prioritises growthist models (for example, related to the sustainable development framework).

No reformist solution falling under the current economic system is conducive to maintaining and ensuring the recovery of the biosphere. Therefore, as social movements we should also be questioning our own anthropocentric and growthist biases, especially around solutions grounded in the monetised economy, without calling for a rupture with the existing system and building a new one. This is in line with a feminist tradition of rupture and is consistent with the scientific evidence demonstrating that the current system cannot bear to hold partial solutions or mere tweaks to the massive global extraction, accumulation and exploitation. Of course, a democratic reform of the international financial architecture is urgently needed because it currently promotes colonial and imperial structures that have imposed a capitalist logic of unequal exchange, harming the lives of millions of people and the subsistence of the planet.

#### **GREENING THE SYSTEM**

The global financial architecture has continued to impose colonial and imperial practices on global South countries. Economic growth is a core ideology of the capitalist system, with its premises entrenched in international instruments supposedly intended to stop and reverse ecological and social harms. Thus, rather than promoting solutions, current international instruments such as Agenda 2030 or the Paris Agreement proudly uphold economic growth as their pillar, driving and

legitimising perverse practices that drove the problems from the very start. Through the interrelated dynamics within the global financial architecture and the corporate capture of the multilateral system, we are witnessing what has been deemed “green colonialism” and “green imperialism”.

The very notion of “green” implies that we can maintain the current economic system if we “green” capitalism enough by transitioning towards renewable energies and less carbon-intensive materials and resources. However, at the heart of this debate lies the resistance to transitioning out of this predatory and extractive system and radically setting the foundations for a changed paradigm. “Green solutions” imply that green extractivism is possible, but they mostly shift the environmental damage from one sector to another. Vijay Kolinjivadi, for instance, mentions that the electric vehicle industry may help reduce carbon emissions but will also cause an increase in the demand for lithium and other minerals, with serious ecological impacts including water pollution and loss, toxic waste spills, biodiversity loss and soil contamination (Kolinjivadi, 2023).

### **BOX 3**

## **“GREEN TRANSITIONS”**

The notion of green colonialism has given rise to a new era of speculative instruments to advance economic growth and accumulation. Take for example the notion of energy transition (War on Want, 2019).<sup>14</sup> From our view of social movements, an energy transition is a just and equitable transformation of the energy system, totally departing from fossil fuel reliance and corporate control towards energy sovereignty (Friends of the Earth, n.d.-b). It would also consider fair shares, common but differentiated responsibilities and equity in the process of transition.

“Climate fair shares” refers to the concept of equitable national contributions to global climate action, encompassing both mitigation efforts and adaptation/loss and damage support, based on principles of equity and responsibility. See also Friends of the Earth International (n.d.-a).

“Common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR) is a principle in international environmental law stating that all countries share a common responsibility to address environmental issues, but not equally, acknowledging that some countries have historically contributed more to environmental problems and have greater capacity to act. See also Hey (n.d.).

However, mainstream economics expects that the energy transition will occur in territories implementing an “electrification of consumption and digitalization” (Lang, Bringel and Manahan, 2024: 3-5). This transition will apply what Camila Moreno calls “carbon metrics”, an attempt to only measure carbon molecules, which “provides a kind of currency for international exchange and creates the illusion that something is being done about environmental degradation” (Lang, Bringel and Manahan, 2024: 3). Yet, it is quite clear that these metrics are not reflective of the complexity and sophisticated web of systems needed to maintain the ecological integrity of the planet.

Applying this logic sets the scene for promoting big green business with new speculative drives. The much-needed finance, access to technology, information and specialised knowledge (often condescendingly considered as “capacity building”) that are needed to “green” the economy are referred to as the “Means of Implementation” (MoI) in the United Nations (UN) space. Yet, these MoI, particularly finance and technology, are used politically to impose conditionalities on the global South and subjugate territories that have been plundered for centuries. The global South is once again seen as a battlefield for appropriation with unfolding racial capitalism, generating racial (Achiume, 2022) and “green” sacrifice zones (Zografos and Robbins, 2020: 543-5) in territories of both the North and South.

Lang, Bringel and Manahan (2024) present the four different dimensions between global North and South that are being reshaped in a green colonialism framing: 1) the aspiration of unlimited raw materials, that global South countries will provide for the energy transition in the global North; 2) the imposition of new conservation schemes in global South territories through carbon offset plans (which distract from the lack of effective mitigation action by global North countries); 3) the use of global South territories to dispose toxic, chemical and electronic waste that is the product of the process to conduct the energy transition; 4) seeing the global South as a new market to sell expensive “clean” technology, by making use of an already distorted global trade regime. In terms of narratives, these new agendas are seemingly being implemented in territories without people or conflict – this is a re-edition of colonial dynamics under a new name. The perversity of it all is that “it complicates resistance by proclaiming itself environment-friendly and indispensable in order to grant humanity a future, a journey in which the racialised populations of the Global South apparently have no seat” Lang, Bringel and Manahan (2024: 5). This is why these authors present climate coloniality as a later stage in green colonialism. It also points to why it is important to steer away from the mono-modal discourse of the climate emergency as the only

ecological challenge because underneath that discourse lies an economic project that is led by a disaster profiteering logic. This is not to say there is no climate emergency, or we should not be concerned about it, seeking urgent climate action. However, it underlines why we should be mindful about the discourse when social movements and the generalised media only target one key issue, leaving aside a more complex way to analyse and seek solutions. Also deeply embedded in this discussion is how the proposals for “conservation” have been at the heart of a colonial project since the appropriation of territories began.

The discussion of colonial dynamics as an imperial logic is also embedded in global affairs. A western imperial project supporting a genocide in Palestine is showing ties with energy imperialism (Funes, 2023), and enforcing military threats, while imposing geopolitical tensions that impact the rest of the world. If the western white supremacist imperial project is so concerned in maintaining a genocide in Palestine, we can only understand it as a re-edition of the priorities, fighting not only to rule over energy provision, but also to realign forces to push back against Russia and China (and their allies) in the last years, who made their way into a certain multipolarity.<sup>15</sup> The western imperial project has been openly unveiling the purpose of the current multilateral system to uphold its primacy over the rest of the world, reflected in the manipulation of the Security Council and dismissal of decisions by the General Assembly, International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court. Ecological imperialism is at the heart of efforts to dismantle the current multilateral system; hence, the collective of social movements needs to keep a vigilant eye and promote a comprehensive and complex engagement in the key arenas discussing the fate of life and the planet.

Green militarism and green imperialism go hand in hand. As Sanam Amin (2024) has shown, military bases are increasingly being deployed alongside mega projects related to the green transition: fossil fuel, carbon sites, or mining sites to extract raw and critical minerals. Amin references the continued military presence in Indigenous Peoples’ lands including in northern Philippines’ Cordillera region, the presence of nearly 800 US military bases in 80 countries, and the case of Myanmar military land grabbing (Amin, 2024: 3). This evidence shows that behind these green “development” projects lie a very dark agenda of control, extraction and appropriation.

In this larger context, where are the human faces? We are told the transition will bring green jobs, with a labour force transitioning from “carbon” intensive to renewable energy activities, or those that have less material engagement with the ecological world, such as digitalised activities or even Artificial Intelligence. Greening is

portrayed first as a reproduction of the same unequal order, but “away” from the fossil imprint. However, as we know very well, global North economies are not only not transitioning away from fossil fuels, but in their obsession with excessive accumulation and appropriation, they are expanding their energy base through renewable energies and a new wave of “extraction on steroids” of raw and critical materials. New projects are expected for both fossil fuel extraction and renewables. The discussions on deep-sea mining<sup>16</sup> are a schizophrenic debate on both markets, while the concern to maintain the integrity of the larger ecosystems related to oceans is nowhere to be seen. If the greening of jobs continues to build a green colonial, climate imperial and military order, then we need to reassess our priorities.

Neoliberal voices argue that digitalising production and consumption processes is part of a green trend. However, the digitalisation of the economy is deeply impacting the labour arena, impoverishing workers’ quality of life, increasing women and gender-based violence, and dismantling the right to unionise and assemble. Advocates assert that by greening jobs, workers only need to shift sectors. However, the new sectors are equally problematic without a change in the system.

Do workers need full support to maintain and seek a dignified way of life while being mindful of the impacts on the ecological balance? Certainly. This is not an attempt to trivialise the realities of those on the ground working in the fossil industry who now face transitioning into the world of “sustainable mining” or infrastructure. There is, however, the possibility of thinking beyond specific projects and sectors to understand that if a system change is needed, the “carbon metric” cannot be the point of entry to determine the resulting conditions. Planning the type of society people want becomes crucial in these moments.

Talking about green labour also hides a greenified and commodified reproduction of the sexual division of labour. I have heard arguments asserting that “care” is green because it is not linked to the fossil fuels value chain. These types of arguments consolidate the notion that care work should remain commodified (valued for the purpose of what it can achieve, and not for the sake of its own value) or, worse, remain part of primitive extraction. To insist that care is green is to insist that it has been and can remain closely tied to the capitalist exploitation and process of accumulation. Feminists want system change, and this cannot happen by using carbon metrics to classify the field of social reproduction, the dimension of time use, the subsidy provided by unpaid domestic and care work or even the activities related to care, even if these are expanded to caring for life and the planet.

## **ENERGY TRANSITION FOR WHOM? THE ERA OF TECHNO-FIXES.**

The dominant carbon metrics discourse states that the global North countries will embark on Green New Deals (GND) to ensure their energy transition. Based on a green colonialist project, raw and critical minerals have been mapped, recognising that most are in territories of global South countries. New “market opportunities” have been laid out so that the global South countries become the providers of these minerals. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries have been told that exiting these categories requires the capacity to rapidly develop the conditions to provide these minerals.

The global efforts for this transition to happen in the global North are incredibly racist, colonial and imperial. Indeed, the global North needs to transition out of its enforced atmospheric colonisation (Hickel, 2020b)<sup>17</sup>. Still, it has to be done by respecting the sovereignty, self-sufficiency and autonomy of the global South countries. The notion that the entire provision of raw and critical materials of the global South needs to be at the service of the global North is outrageous. Not only would the scale of mega projects needed to maintain the lifestyle in global North countries devastate every form of ecosystem in these territories, but it would also dismiss and commodify the lives of every being not part of the imperial project.

Global South countries face big dilemmas. Firstly, many territories do not have to confront how to carry out an energy transition when they do not have access to electricity. For instance, about 600 million Africans lack electricity; by 2030, 565 million Africans will still be without access to electricity (Sokona et al., 2023: 13-14). Others face rationing and cannot meet the needs and demands of their own populations, such as in South Africa or Ecuador. Those with mega energy and infrastructure projects are responding to the needs of global North countries rather than their communities’ present and future needs. They are trapped in a new discourse of “development” that expands the role of the International Financial Institutions in carrying out “climate action” under new loans and conditionalities, and are also trapped in the vicious circle of needing foreign currencies to pay their debts and debt servicing, with no room to carry out a planned projection that would ensure the protection of the ecosystem’s integrity and the wellbeing of their people.

## **BOX 4**

### **SOUTH AFRICA'S DILEMMA**

South Africa's *Just Energy Transition Partnership* was announced with great fanfare at Conference of the Parties (COP) 26 in Glasgow in 2021 (CISL, n.d.). It is a USD8.5 billion funding package from the European Union, Germany, France, the US and the UK (with the Netherlands and Denmark subsequently joining) to help South Africa achieve a just transition in the energy sector. This partnership has received substantial criticism for the small proportion of grant financing that was allocated – only 4% of the total amount – with the vast majority coming from concessional loans in 2022 (Lehmann-Grube et al., 2024). Yet shortly thereafter, South Africa's exports of coal to Europe rose eight-fold during the first half of 2022 compared to previous year given the ban on Russian coal linked to the Ukraine war (Banya, 2022)

The Green New Deal (GND) falls under the premises of the Paris Agreement (UNCC, 2016) and the need to address the climate emergency, as stipulated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (UNFCCC, 1992; UNCC, 1994). Yet, this Convention has two other sister conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2022) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD, 1994). To implement the GND as conceived requires a massive deployment of mega projects in the global South. These developments will in turn devastate any possibility of survival of the current ecosystems integrity and will directly undermine the agreements made in the Conventions on Biodiversity and Desertification. The demand for coherence is key to ensuring comprehensive rather than siloed measures. The premise of a green capitalism driving the content of those agreements is of great concern.

## **BOX 5**

### **TECHNO FIXES, FALSE SOLUTIONS AND PROFIT PRIORITIES**

Rather than committing to real action, climate agreements are filled with techno-fixes that prioritise measures relying on technological advancement to solve problems initiated in the economic realm. These techno-fixes have been denounced extensively by social movements as dangerous distractions and false solutions.

The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development defines these false solutions as “those that pose as ‘climate actions’ but in reality, do not address the root causes of the climate catastrophe. They can be largely characterised by the neoliberal corporate capture of climate action and corporate greenwashing, essentially perpetuating climate injustices” (Celestial, 2023: 6).

Social movements speak of dangerous distractions, such as geoengineering and Offshore Carbon Capture and Storage because these bring uncalculated risks and unprecedented monitoring challenges. Not only have the technologies not really shown the promised results but innumerable elements cannot be factored in, increasing the range of potential negative impacts. Some of the proposals, such as covering the sun with artificial clouds to “cool off” the planet may bring incalculable and irreversible harm (Ebbs et al., 2024).

Elite decision-makers are more willing to risk life on the planet than possibly losing profits.

## **BOX 6**

### **WHAT IS GEOENGINEERING?**

“Geoengineering is the intentional, large-scale technological manipulation of the Earth’s systems, often discussed as a techno-fix for combating climate change. Climate geoengineering technologies can be divided into three broad areas: so-called solar radiation management (reflecting sunlight to space), greenhouse gas removal and sequestration and weather modification. Geoengineering can refer to a wide range of techniques, including blasting sulphate particles into the stratosphere or “whitening” clouds to reflect the sun’s rays; dumping iron particles in the oceans to nurture CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing plankton; firing silver iodide into clouds to produce rain or genetically engineering crops so their foliage can better reflect sunlight” (ETC Group, n.d.)

## **THE DISCURSIVE TRAP AROUND CLIMATE FINANCE AND THE BETRAYAL BY THE GLOBAL NORTH COUNTRIES**

The climate emergency is indeed a key planetary boundary, and overshooting it has massive negative impacts, as we are already witnessing. 2024 had become the warmest year on record, with the annual temperature exceeding 1.5°C above the preindustrial level (Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2024). Although the yearly temperature may vary over time, it is concerning that the Paris Agreement limit has already been surpassed.

This paper refers to the “climate change agenda” as a “climate emergency”, given the many implications for the balance of the biosphere. The climate emergency is directly linked with the concept of “atmospheric colonisation and appropriation” (Fanning and Hickel, 2023). The idea is that the atmospheric space should be understood as a common good; however, through excess industrial carbon emissions, global North countries have exceeded their carbon budget and thus bear most of the responsibility in causing climate change (Hickel, 2020b). The notions of colonisation and appropriation refer to these industrial carbon emissions being directly linked to global North capital accumulation and extraction with planetary impacts at the level of land, energy, resources, labour, time and atmospheric space. The global North’s refusal to pay for the harm it has caused (more widely linked to green colonisation and green imperialism) has also destroyed overall life conditions for many species and ecosystems on the planet and led to the loss of lives.

Amidst all this, under the UNFCCC, the climate finance discussion is immersed in formalities and embedded in climate colonisation logic. When it is reclaimed by social movements and voiced by real global South leaders, the real dimensions of the struggle for life, justice, and reparations are apparent.

### **WHAT IS CLIMATE FINANCE?**

The debate on climate finance is now crucial. In the context of the UNFCCC, generally climate finance is understood as the money that is invested in climate action as a result of a commitment of global North countries to pay for their historical responsibilities. For some, this means the global South needs to get “more money” to implement climate action. For others, this means the global South receives comprehensive support for climate action (mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage) based on a logic of reparations. This should provide the global North with an opportunity to deliver on its historical responsibilities and pay for the harm it has caused. However,

given global North pressures under the UNFCCC, they interpret climate finance as a new frontier to impose a logic of green colonialism and imperialism, while refusing to be held accountable for their own climate action and colonial atmospheric appropriation.

## **BOX 7**

### **TYPES OF CLIMATE ACTION**

**Mitigation** is defined by the UNFCCC as “efforts to reduce emissions and enhance sinks”, since “there is a direct relation between global average temperatures and the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the key for the solution to the climate change problem rests in decreasing the amount of emissions released into the atmosphere and in reducing the current concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), by enhancing sinks (e.g. increasing the area of forests)”. Interestingly enough, this definition focuses on the expansion of sinks, but not on the limits to emissions (UNCC, n.d.-c).

**Adaptation** is defined by the UNFCCC as: “Adaptation refers to adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects. It refers to changes in processes, practices and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change. In simple terms, countries and communities need to develop adaptation solutions and implement actions to respond to current and future climate change impacts” (UNCC, n.d.-a).

**Loss and damage** is referred to by the UNFCCC as “irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt”. (UNCC, n.d.-b).

These contested debates make it hard to define climate finance. Still, the Standing Committee on Finance of the UNFCCC hosts a basic definition (UNFCCC, 2024a) that refers to flows directly contributing to climate outcomes, and as updated in September 2024, gives greater support for country-driven climate plans like Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (UNCC, n.d.-e) and National Adaptation Plans (UNCC, n.d.-d.). In this discussion, some have argued that climate finance should be limited to only what is committed nationally. However, despite supporting country-driven climate action, this definition is extremely limited because voluntary

commitments by countries have fallen short in national capacities and voluntary pledges to address the climate emergency fully. Even if NDCs include estimations of conditioned and non-conditioned finance (conditioned by the limitations of national funding and by foreign support), it is still limited to the voluntary nature of climate action.

The UNFCCC's mandate is limited in terms of economic justice, which poses a challenge in achieving a definition of climate finance that is ambitious enough and also rooted in principles of climate justice. Of course, the UNFCCC should guide national action to drive the climate change planetary boundary back to a safe zone. It is indeed key that the UNFCCC definition of climate finance embeds the principles of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities, Equity and the recognition of historical responsibilities by developed countries. The discussions on the New Collective Quantifiable Climate Finance Goal (NCQG) (UNCC, n.d.-f) (see discussion under Section four) have shown that the Standing Committee on Finance in the UNFCCC needs to undertake a deeper review of the definition of climate finance, given its current insufficiencies. It is in the interest of global South countries that the UNFCCC hosts the definition of climate finance (rather than, for example, the Bretton Woods institutions) in order to respond at the level of reparations owed by global North countries.

Climate finance is commonly understood as what was agreed in the Paris Agreement, especially Article 9. Article 2.1.(c) of the Paris Agreement has also been at the centre of finance within UNFCCC discussions. It is useful to understand what is implied in this discussion before addressing the NCQG (which is within the mandate of Article 9).

## **BOX 8**

### **THE GLOBAL SCOPE OF CLIMATE FINANCE: ART 2.1.(C)**

Developed countries have delayed NCQG negotiations by insisting that the process should be entirely linked to the mandate of Article 2.1.(c) in the Paris Agreement which states the need to make “finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development” UNFCCC (2024). This has been understood in a wider sense as harmonising the global financial architecture with the Paris Agreement mandate. Article 2.1.(c) has thus been utilised informally to expand the mandate of the IFIs, by promoting both the World Bank Evolution Roadmap, and a mission-creep expansion of their presence in the global South

countries. Global North countries have also argued in the UNFCCC that given that there is “not enough money to deliver climate finance”, then Article 2.1.c needs to have a strategic role to mobilise finance from diverse actors and through different tools. In reality, this means renegeing on their international commitments and historical responsibility to deliver climate finance within a logic of reparations to carry out mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage action.

Negotiations to discuss Article 2.1.(c) will take place in 2025. Article 2.1.(c) should be considered within the realm of the mandate and faculties of the UNFCCC. The alignment of financial flows with the Paris Agreement should be mapped in terms of the tools within climate action and climate finance that could be helpful in achieving this harmonisation, while allowing other spaces with the proper mandate to achieve the larger structural and global reform of the financial architecture. This does not mean that the status quo, and even less the Bretton Woods, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or illegitimate spaces of power such as the G7 or the G20 get to decide the way the global financial architecture will harmonise the premises of ecological integrity. On the contrary, these decisions need to happen under the United Nations arena, under universal decision making, reclaiming a democratic economic order that responds to the people and the planet.

One of these spaces under the United Nations (UN) is the Financing for Development (FfD) Conference (Civil Society Financing for Development Mechanism, n.d.; IISD, n.d.) which is a normative space to discuss global economic and financial dynamics. Given that it is a member states-led process, there is more room for democratic decision making, allowing space to raise the voice of global South actors although unequal dynamics of power do occur.

I mention that Article 2.1.(c) should focus on tools that articulate climate finance with the larger logic of financial flows but cannot be expected to be the point of entry to the reform of the global financial architecture. To think otherwise would be extremely dangerous because the UNFCCC does not have the scope to deal with the economic justice agenda. Furthermore, climate finance cannot be conceived as the end-all solution to the climate emergency, especially as it has been interpreted to date in the UNFCCC. This interpretation is embedded in the dynamics of international cooperation in which Official Development Assistance (ODA) is still following a colonial logic, along with private investment and financial speculation. Yet, this is a key agenda for justice for the global South, and should not be used to monitor, control and condition Southern actions. On the contrary, climate finance can be a point of entry to hold global North actors accountable.

As it is understood now, climate finance cannot be seen as the main entry point for economic justice regarding the climate emergency. Even if the finance agenda is a crucial component in monitoring the extent of climate action, UNFCCC climate finance refers mostly to global North funding allocated to the South to carry out climate action. Climate finance, therefore, cannot be the main reference to account for the entirety of climate action globally. Thus far, the UNFCCC definition of climate finance sheds light more on the “donor” or “contributor” role of global North actors, and less on the actors implementing climate action. Therefore, global North countries still need to account for their investment in their own transition, particularly regarding carbon emissions, given that they account for larger excess emissions globally. Even if the general discourse of social movements estimates the amount of climate finance as the overall figure needed to remain below a 1.5°c degrees increase, global North countries should be transparent about their investment in their own territories and the quality of actions about an energy transition. This transition in the global North should be based on a degrowth paradigm, with reduced levels of consumption and production and one that is not, as explained above, an energy transition based on climate coloniality. Rather, a system change-oriented move that is also steering away from an economy based on fossil fuels.

At the same time, climate finance cannot be expected to deliver on every dimension of the ecological integrity agenda. Climate finance should centre on one planetary boundary, that of climate change, bearing in mind its cross-cutting dimension, but also taking into account that climate action cannot undermine the efforts to remain in a safe zone in any of the other planetary boundaries. The UNFCCC only has a mandate on climate change, not on the rest of the planetary boundaries. So, whatever decisions are made regarding the UNFCCC finance agenda will be limited to this realm of climate change and not the rest of the ecological integrity agenda.

Many discussions occur under the sister Biodiversity and Desertification conventions, and other UN bodies dealing with environmental agendas, such as UNEP. There are, for instance, negotiations on plastics (referring to an aspect - and not the entirety - of the planetary boundary “Novel entities”), in which the fossil fuel companies’ lobby has also been wreaking havoc, showing that the fight for a system change has to be done across all spheres.

# 4. THE NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIABLE GOAL (NCQG) ON CLIMATE FINANCE AND THE ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNFCCC

## CONTESTATIONS AROUND THE NCQG

For instance, the UNFCCC has endured the global North's attempts to weaken its mandate by refusing to acknowledge the full principles stated under the Convention in the Paris Agreement. Overall, it is already questionable that a binding instrument such as the Paris Agreement relies solely on voluntary reporting through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This is part of a larger effort to undermine the role of multilateralism and to evade effectively achieving meaningful solutions. In December 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) held advisory hearings to determine State obligations to address the climate crisis, including by upholding human rights law.

In a perhaps not-so-surprising turn of events, global North countries weaponised the Paris Agreement to claim there is no room for the international human rights framework in climate action, arguing that the only instrument tackling climate change is the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, they argued that the Paris Agreement's operationalisation is limited to voluntary action (the NDCs), eliminating any binding State obligations.<sup>18</sup> Wealthy countries were joined in these hearings by big polluters that claimed they have no legal responsibility to phase out fossil fuels. Fortunately, many voices were counteracting those arguments (Ciel, 2024).<sup>19</sup> The ICJ will issue an Advisory Opinion to clarify the State's obligations regarding climate change in 2025. It is interesting to note that a judge already asked a key question about whether the argument of the Paris Agreement's implementation relies only on voluntary contributions. If that is the case, are these countries then assuming that the essence of the Paris Agreement is only procedural (that is, to deliver these NDCs)? Are there no outcomes expected of those voluntary contributions?<sup>20</sup> This question could potentially dismantle two arguments: (1) the argument of the isolated nature of the Paris Agreement because if it is only procedural then it is evidently insufficient; or (2) the argument of the lack of binding mandates to deliver an outcome in which case it will have to be tied to historical responsibilities immediately, and to phase out fossil fuels.

The same arguments about avoiding responsibilities are made about climate finance. Based on a twisted interpretation of the Paris Agreement, the NCQG became the

latest fraud in multilateral arenas and the latest attempt to dismantle the global North countries' historical responsibilities. The NCQG is the continuation of the commitment made by developed countries in Copenhagen (COP 15) to deliver 100 billion USD per year to developing countries (UNCC, 2009). Despite the OECD arguing the opposite, these commitments have not been met.<sup>21</sup> The NCQG was agreed upon in the Paris Agreement under Article 9, which focused on finance. But wealthy countries have been attempting to misinterpret two other articles (Article 2.1. (c) of the Paris Agreement, and Article 53 of the Paris Agreement Decision) to undermine the relation between the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC, and the role of the specific historical responsibilities of rich countries in the delivery of climate finance. In what may seem a legalistic discussion, we are made to witness the efforts of wealthy countries to dismantle multilateral agreements and institutions.

But first, what was at stake in the discussion? Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement stated that developed countries “shall **provide** Developed country financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention” (UNFCCC, 2015a: 13). As the text reads, the direct **provision** of climate finance would come from wealthy countries. Article 9.3, however, speaks that “developed countries will **continue to take the lead in mobilizing** climate finance from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels” (UNFCCC, 2015a: 13). This means there is a radical difference between provision (which would be directly channeled by developed countries, in line with historical responsibilities, and mostly in public funding) and mobilisation (which implies an expansion of the “contributors base”, including the private sector, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), and other financial instruments). Notice that the language “continue to take the lead” already dilutes the sole responsibility of developed countries in delivering climate finance.

Why is this so important? The discussion refers to the tension between having climate finance mostly reliant on public funding (which could guarantee that the wellbeing of people and the planet are prioritised), as opposed to the interests of private actors centred around profit. Public finance also ensures accountability and transparency, whereas private finance lends itself to practices of opacity. Another core debate refers to the nature of climate finance delivery because thus far 70 per cent of climate finance is based on loans, not grants (or so-called concessional finance) (UNCTAD, 2023a). Including MDBs in the contributors base means that climate finance will reinforce the debt cycle, as it operates mostly on loans, not grants.

And yet, developed countries have tried to create a loophole in the Paris outcomes. In 2015, two instruments were agreed upon: the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015a) and

the Paris Agreement Decision (1/CP.21) (UNFCCC, 2015b). The Decision goes hand in hand with the Paris Agreement but is not usually well known. Even though Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement clearly stated the responsibility of developed countries to **deliver on the provision of climate finance**, Article 53 of the Paris Agreement Decision was an attempt to deviate from that responsibility by setting the mandate of the NCQG:

“53. Also decides that, in accordance with Article 9, paragraph 3, of the Agreement, developed countries intend to continue their existing collective mobilization goal through 2025 in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation; prior to 2025 the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement shall set a new collective quantified goal from a floor of USD 100 billion per year, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries”

Paris Agreement Decision, 1/CP.21 (UNFCCC, 2015b: 8)

The text only mentions Article 9.3 of the Paris Agreement, referring to the mobilisation of resources, but not 9.1, which refers to the provision of resources. Developed countries have attempted to push for a limited and perverse interpretation of the financial commitments, assigning weight only to Article 53 of the Decision and Article 9.3 of the Paris Agreement and leaving aside the comprehensiveness of the entire legal framing of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement as a whole, including Article 9.1. What they argued (and what they perversely “planted” in the texts in 2015) is that the NCQG only refers to the mobilisation of finance by other actors who are not Parties of the UNFCCC. Ultimately, this bad faith spirit moved them throughout the negotiations and led to the disastrous outcome of the 2024 COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan (UNCC, 2024).

Importantly, this twisted interpretation of the Paris Agreement and its Decision about climate finance is only **one** legal interpretation. Many others include comprehensive components of justice, historical responsibilities and the need to deliver climate finance to carry out climate action in developing countries. The fact that developed countries are acting in bad faith both about the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC, as well as about international law, does not mean they have the correct or only interpretation. Those who are most impacted not only have the international legal framework on their side but are also on the side of justice. We cannot forget this as we keep pushing for ecological integrity and climate justice.

The document agreed for the NCQG is a tragedy. The figure of 300 USD billion per year by 2035 is ridiculous. It falls far below the estimated trillions needed to tackle

developing countries' needs to carry out climate action (the current NCQG is less than 12% of what is required) (Gabbatiss, 2024). As many economists emphasise, with current inflation rates, the USD300 billion is equivalent to less than the USD100 billion agreed in 2009 in Copenhagen. Over time, the amount will continue to lose value and capacity to be effective (Greenfield and Noor, 2024)<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, the NCQG undermines the obligation of developed countries to provide climate finance for developing countries, declaring that “all actors ... work together to enable the scaling up of financing” and “developed country Parties taking the lead” in this effort (it even includes South-South cooperation as part of this equation!). NCQG also shifts away from the major commitment of public finance provision and instead refers to a “wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources”, and it includes all climate-related outflows mobilised by multilateral development banks. It even contains specific language that refers to an “evolution agenda” that echoes the Evolution Roadmap set by the World Bank. In particular, this signals a wider era of mission-creep by the IFIs in developing countries by expanding their scope of action. This development is extremely worrisome, due to the harmful role IFIs have had investing in fossil fuels or mega-projects that have undermined ecosystem integrity while increasing lending instruments for this purpose and encouraging privatisation via “unbundling” state-owned enterprises and regulatory changes to increase energy market liberalisation. De facto, the NCQG is amplifying the scope of debt instruments rather than reducing them. Sadly, there is no explicit commitment on Loss and Damage in the NCQG. It actually captures the future finance flows for the expansion of “existing projects” rather than considering small projects, therefore dismissing the potential of local action and communities' direct access to climate finance. Although there is a mention of a review in 2030 and “deliberations” on the way forward before 2035, there is no mention about the commitment of developed countries to provide climate finance, and, as sand in the hands, there is a lesser chance of that with the approval of this NCQG (UNFCCC, 2024b).<sup>23</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON NCQG

Even though expectations for the NCQG should have been moderated due to the very nature of the UNFCCC, its mandate and its faculties, and the extent of what could be agreed in terms of the larger global system (including global economic and financial dynamics), the final outcome of the NCQG was a tragedy. It is not an exaggeration to say that it poses an extreme risk for the future. The bigger concern is that it is part of broader efforts to undermine and dismantle the reach of the Rio Conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification and the larger UN system of agreements and treaties on environmental integrity. Not only did the NCQG no longer recognise the obligation of developed countries to deliver climate finance, but it has also been worded in a manner to further allow developed country interpretation of the Paris Agreement as being detached from the UNFCCC. This is an attempt to increasingly weaken and undermine the international order based on a multilateral system focused on collective global wellbeing.

Through this NCQG, there will be de facto no real climate finance in the way it is understood in the UNFCCC. Given the increasing efforts to highlight the Paris Agreement as the only instrument for climate change, separated from the UNFCCC, and to present the Paris Agreement itself as voluntary with no mandate for real delivery, social movements have plenty of work to assess. What is the relevance of climate change COPs, and what real outcome can be obtained within the hallways of the UNFCCC? These are hard questions that can only be answered collectively.

For an economic and financial agenda that delivers on the ecological integrity agenda, there is a need to promote a system change grounded in recognising how our societies are embedded in and are part of the larger ecological realm. The system is not just an “externality” or a “sector”. Our entire understanding of how we conceive our lives, especially the materiality of our lives, our practices and our impacts on the different planetary boundaries needs to be articulated in our economic conception, including in the reshaping of the global economic and financial architecture and how we promote/carry out real economies on the ground whilst embodying a caring relationship with people and planet. This also implies the recognition of sovereign needs at the territorial/national and regional level, ensuring self-sufficiency and autonomy for global South countries, free of predatory and extractive colonial and imperial ties.

## IS THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) FIT FOR ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY?

As discussed in this paper, UN agendas have not always aligned with solutions seeking system change. On the contrary, they have furthered the mechanisms in which this economic system thrives. This is the case of the sustainable development agenda; as with the case of climate finance, the notion of “sustainable development finance” is also a thorny issue. Many actors have questioned the concept of sustainable development for years. Deeply embedded is the premise that economic growth is one of the three pillars of sustainable development alongside the social and environmental pillars. If sustainable development maintains the ideology of growthism, then how far can it promote a system change? The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are evidence that the structural elements perpetuating inequalities and power imbalances (such as wealth concentration and the monopolies of multinational companies) have been left untouched (Hickel, 2018). The mainstream discourses on sustainable development finance focus on the need to deliver the Sustainable Development Agenda and correlated instruments (Habitat, Financing for Development, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Management). But overall, expectations for delivering/ramping up funding for SDG implementation and fulfilment fall short of calling for a system change. This expectation has also brought about a misconception about the Financing for Development (FfD) process. Many actors expect FfD to deliver increased “funding” or “money” for implementation without understanding that the FfD process is a normative space that can transform the rules of the game. The process is therefore not limited to the SDGs, but rather, is a space with an immense potential to prioritise people’s wellbeing and the planet’s health.

Given that the UN is currently aligned with green colonialism and imperialism, proposals such as the one by the United Nations Secretary-General on an SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030 (UNSG, 2023) need to be analysed to understand if they expect to keep the status quo by calling for more of the same (more money to maintain the same structures and processes that are leading us to the extinction of life).

Given widespread official recognition that the SDGs will not be met by 2030, new discussions are taking place in the UN about the way forward. Options include possibly negotiating a new set of Global Goals or extending the current SDGs until 2050. Additional goals are suggested, including a goal on racial discrimination and planetary boundaries.

Two major questions remain unanswered. Firstly, suppose the sustainable development framework cannot in and of itself be transformative enough. What is

the point in ratifying commitments that mean, in practice, tying the global South to a deeper colonial and imperial dynamic? Not because the issues are irrelevant, but because of how these agendas are implemented; for example, promoting Public-Private Partnerships across the entire implementation cycle, enhancing foreign investment and race to the bottom logics, not tackling systemic barriers, etc. Secondly, is the UN fit for purpose or delivery, especially for ecological integrity? In (Reyes, 2023) I have wondered if the UN itself is leading the world beyond planetary boundaries.

The extent of the UN corporate capture<sup>24</sup> has been discussed extensively, with further discussions on how the multistakeholderism approach is undermining member-led processes (Gleckmann, 2023; TNI, n.d.), while bringing to the decision table large corporations with clear conflicts of interest.

## **THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS**

In parallel, and as an alternative to demanding sustainable development finance, or even the sustainable development framework, the global South is proposing reparations, not only at the local and territorial scale, but rather under new and innovative framings that refer to the macro and global agendas of economic and ecological justice. The global South cannot be limited to demanding more ODA, foreign investment or financial tools tied to trade or technology conditionalities with more debt and austerity to ensure its own development. All these dynamics have been used to subsume and subject the global South more and more under the western imperial and colonial project. Reparations come as an alternative precisely because their starting point is the recognition of predation, theft, plundering and extraction by global North countries, all while carrying out genocidal and ecocidal practices. I have referred in another paper (Reyes, 2024c) to the macro dimension of reparations, which, as Priya Lukka et al. (2023) have stated, is based on the principle of non-repetition. The understanding then is that the reform of the global financial architecture is key to avoiding repeating the harm that macroeconomic and financial measures have had in global South countries. This issue of reparations will be further addressed in the last section of this paper.

## **BOX 9**

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-REPETITION**

This is often referred to as guarantees of non-recurrence or non-repetition and refers to measures taken to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations or other wrongful acts. It's a key aspect of transitional justice, aiming to ensure that past abuses do not repeat themselves and to build sustainable peace and rule of law. (OHCHR, 2005)

### **THE DANGER OF MONETISED AGENDAS WITHOUT BEARING IN MIND THE NON-MONETISED DIMENSION AND PRIMITIVE EXTRACTION**

We are used to thinking of economic logics in terms of monetised agendas. However, the non-monetised dimensions are key, and even greater. It is important to understand the trap of a monetised understanding of the economy in order for us to break the current paradigms and show the extent of the harm these can do. This paper will mention some entry points to debt, trade, ODA, the role of the financial sector and, as an example of a heterodox monetised agenda, the tax justice movement proposals.

A key dimension of monetised agendas is how debt has been weaponised against global South countries, as a tool of subjugation and oppression. Much documentation<sup>25</sup> has been done on this. However, the environmental justice movement has also pointed out the ecological debt historically owed by global North countries to the global South. While global South countries have historically and currently transferred massive amounts of resources to the global North,<sup>26</sup> which has degraded their own territories in the process, they have fallen prey to debt traps, in which they are not allowed to default. Correcting the narrative means highlighting both this draining from the global South to the North using an unequal exchange and the harm done through the many economic and financial tools used by the global North to extract and predate, plunder and appropriate the resources in the South while destabilising the biosphere. The ecological debt includes the amounts plundered in the past, plus new forms of human exploitation, the appropriation of natural resources, biopiracy (Cardoso, 2023), and the destruction and extraction of symbolic and material social content that are cultural, biological and archaeological in nature.

## **BOX 10**

### **ECOLOGICAL DEBT**

Acción Ecológica, of Ecuador has developed a powerful definition:

“Ecological Debt is ‘The Debt accumulated by the Northern industrial countries towards the Third World countries on account of resource plundering, environmental damages, and the free occupation of environmental space to deposit wastes, such as greenhouse gases. Those who abuse the biosphere, transgress ecological limits and enforce unsustainable patterns of resource extraction of a range of natural resources must begin to discharge this ecological debt. The ecological debt accumulated through such processes as the extraction of a range of natural resources, ecologically unequal terms of trade externalising ecological costs, the appropriation of traditional knowledge, for example, of seeds and plants, on which the modern agri-business and biotechnology are based, contamination of the atmosphere through the emission of various greenhouse gases, producing and testing chemical and nuclear weapons in countries of the South, and the dumping of chemicals and toxic waste in the Third World. The current system of neo-liberal globalised market economy maintains and augments the ecological debt through such mechanisms as the [structural adjustment programmes] SAPs imposed by the international financial institutions, foreign investments, unequal terms of trade, forcing countries to produce export products in order to redress financial debts; and through the trade-related Intellectual Property Rights within the [World Trade Organization] WTO which protect the patenting of genetic material for agriculture and pharmacology by [Transnational corporations] TNCs without compensation for the original guardians of the biodiversity of the South.”

(Raina, 2005)

Further, there are some calls to frame ODA commitments that have not been delivered (approximately USD5.7 trillion) (Seery, 2020) as ODA debt (Derlich and Simonds, 2024). These are debts owed by the global North countries and should be paid up with expediency under a reparations framework. The debt justice movement has had a key voice in enhancing the demands of the climate justice movement, in terms of bringing up the ecological debt, as well as the extent of loans in the climate finance realm, to warn about the logics that should be avoided in the new agreement on the NCQG. It has been estimated that 70 per cent of the current climate finance is in the form of loans (UNCTAD, 2023a), not grants with harsher conditions for Small Island

Developing States and Low Income Countries, which also face the hardest impacts of the climate emergency. In this scenario, social movements are demanding that the new NCQG be primarily based on concessional finance, not on loans. The debt justice movement is also warning against debt swaps, a figure that would imply that existing debts of developing countries are “turned” into “climate finance”. Experiences of debt swaps are minimal, with very burdensome processes for the smaller countries and excessive time to carry out the agreements, with very small amounts and impacts. Debt swaps have been deemed false solutions and should not distract from the larger systemic reforms needed to tackle the complex linkages between debt and climate finance (Fresnillo, 2023).

Trade and international development cooperation rules have played against the global South. It is therefore important to question their being rooted in a “development” framework rather than being tools to expand green colonialism and imperialism. The case of trade is closely linked to how the Intellectual Property agenda has been manipulated to benefit elites since the Ronda de Uruguay and the setting up of the World Trade Organization. Current regulations in the trade system are playing against efforts to achieve ecological integrity. For instance, in 2023, 70 per cent of Investor-State Dispute Settlements (when private companies sue governments) were set against governments of the global South (UNDESA, 2023: 111) when they were trying to implement their environmental and climate commitments. This is more so with fossil fuel companies and investors in the energy sector. These lawsuits directly target measures by governments to implement policies on environmental protection, human rights and local communities. It is interesting to note that 92 per cent of claimants are from high-income countries.<sup>27</sup>

In the case of international development cooperation, ODA has been used as a soft power tool, and weaponised against the interests of global South countries when negotiating key issues. For example, climate finance is one of the direct threats to individual countries in specific negotiations. Other examples include voting in the General Assembly about the situation in Palestine, with the SIDS voting in favour of Israel (UN, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2024).<sup>28</sup>

The financial sector has a larger say in the pragmatic decisions being made every day globally. These actors include the Bretton Woods Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, the banking system, and increasingly the global asset managers with vested interests in the main profiting industries, including the military industrial complex or the fossil fuels industry. Digitalisation of the economy poses many more challenges in assessing the complexity of the financial sector’s influence in all aspects

of the economic and financial architecture. However, digitalisation is having negative impacts in expanding the informality of jobs, the precariousness of life, and even challenging the currency sovereignty dimension, with countries like El Salvador turning to Bitcoins and dollarisation, destabilising and endangering the livelihoods and real economies on the ground. To a certain extent the financial sector has engulfed every possible sector: as UNCTAD's report states (UNCTAD, 2023b), even the food systems companies are now working as financial entities, with speculative activities centred on profiting from the financial market rather than focusing on delivering services for the food value chain. Saskia Sassen (2018) has also shown how the financial sector is used to speculate in all areas of life to increase profitability margins, even if that means disrupting key economic global and local processes.

However, the monetised views are not only upheld by the orthodox lens. At the heart of many demands for economic justice lie extremely monetised views, without acknowledging the impacts and interconnection to the ecological integrity agenda, the non-monetised dimension or the link to primitive extraction. This is the case, for instance, of a large segment of current tax justice demands. The generalised premise is that taxing the wealthy (through progressive taxation), combatting illicit financial flows, or taxing polluters are a means to obtain liquidity that can be spent/invested in public services, human rights, gender equality and climate action. These notions point to the fiscal tools being a monetised means to address one problem with more money and being invested in a solution. Yet, as has been shown here, the dimension of primitive extraction questions whether the monetised approach is the right "solution" for a non-monetised problem. Especially since those non-monetised problems have a larger estimation of value than the entire amount of money currently circulating in the world. Further, what could be the valuation of ecosystems integrity, social reproduction, or the subsidy provided by Indigenous Peoples in procuring the integrity of land-based and marine environment. As noted by the UN "Three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions. On average these trends have been less severe or avoided in areas held or managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities" (UN, 2019).

The tax justice movement has emphasised the "tax" dimension, without clarifying a theory of change for the "justice" dimension. It is not enough to say that we need progressive taxation and that the wealthy need to pay. What lies underneath the injustices denounced as part of primitive extraction are incalculable losses, harm and violent experiences. Furthermore, in a moment in which we have surpassed six of nine planetary boundaries, the tax justice movement cannot simply propose that polluters

pay their share of taxes (regardless of how large the amount is) and then continue their economic activity to extract and surpass planetary boundaries, including cross-cutting climate change and biodiversity integrity. The tax justice movement can learn from the cap, fee and dividend proposals, trying to articulate better the balance between the monetised and non-monetised dimensions, bearing in mind a projection towards the future in short, medium and long term that involves the regulation of extractive activity and the halting of predatory activity.

## **BOX 11**

### **CAP, FEE AND DIVIDEND PROPOSALS**

These systems “charge industries a progressively rising fee for resource and energy use, and distribute the yields as an equal dividend to all citizens” (Hickel, 2020a: 221-222 in Reyes, 2024c). For a further explanation of the cap, fee and dividend proposal see Reyes (2024c). For applied examples on what these would entail, see Cap and Share Climate Alliance (n.d.)

For years, there have been proposals on taxing millionaires. The more recent one specifically suggests a 2 per cent tax (Zucman, 2024) on their entire income, arguing that they will not feel this at all. The narrative is that with the money gathered by this 2 per cent globally, countries can all pay for activities devoted to poverty eradication, gender equality, health, education, social protection and more. These sound technical proposals come with good will and entry points useful for broader purposes (such as country-by-country reporting). However, in the planetary boundaries and global justice frameworks, we have to centre the negative impacts of multibillionaires on our societies including excess carbon emissions, exploitation of the labour force, predation of ecosystems, human rights violations, the capture of our multilateral systems, disaster profiteering, displacement of entire populations, and many others.

It has been estimated that “31-67 per cent and 51-91 per cent of the planetary boundary breaching responsibility could be attributed to the global top 10 per cent and top 20 per cent of consumers, respectively, from both developed and developing countries”

(Tian et al., 2024).

The overall activities and mere existence of multibillionaires have criminal and ecocidal effects. The ecological and economic justice movements should demand that the presence of multibillionaires be eradicated. Extremely needed measures, such as

country-by-country reporting, should be pursued. Although challenging, much-needed conversations need to take place among movements, recognising how we can all learn from each other to better support a collective vision.

## **5. A VISION FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

The debates presented here all have in common either an anthropocentric or monetised approach to the materiality of life, or a siloed way of thinking about the many systems that operate in the economic, social, geopolitical and ecological spheres. There are, indeed, alternative visions that come from the global South. Feminist alternatives are attempting to provide more encompassing solutions to these tensions. These alternatives are not mutually exclusive but complementary, reflecting different angles of an agenda for justice, tackling specific issues that should be addressed in a comprehensive dream for a different world guided by multiple and plural paradigms. This is not an exhaustive list but outlines key entry points for our common work.

### **A FEMINIST PROPOSAL**

Before describing alternatives, it is imperative to recognise that, above all, this paper aims to develop a feminist proposal. Solutions cannot be selected without a clear understanding of a comprehensive plan that includes the elements brought to the table by different feminist movements. I myself am a feminist who recognises the lineage within the structural feminist tradition of the feminism of rupture, in which the macroeconomy is central to the analysis and understanding of the world. However, this specific tradition is not expected to represent the entire feminist vision. It also has to be expanded and put into dialogue with other feminist traditions.

In this discussion, knowledge generated by the ecofeminism tradition of thought is key. As in every movement, ecofeminism can be seen as wide and even at times contradictory within its own voices. Some of its precepts have been criticised for naturalising gender inequalities (especially the role of women within the sexual division of labour) or for shaping an anthropocentric narrative of “nature” (sometimes ascribing “feminine” qualities to it). However, across the ecofeminist movement there were always arguments about the centrality and materiality of the ecological dimension, showing how human societies have disregarded the negative impacts of their footprints and analysing the role of capitalism (especially by the socialist ecofeminists) in determining the interactions within the many dimensions of the biosphere cycles.<sup>29</sup> We owe a great deal to ecofeminists, and we need to continue

engaging with the different voices that can help us shape a more thorough, sophisticated and complex understanding of our world so that our solutions are also free from the confines of our own minds.

Is the agenda I am laying out an ecofeminist one? I would hesitate to call it such. But I do know that the landscape I am portraying here shares the concern for real conditions needed to generate and reproduce the materiality of life. This view is at the heart of my feminism of rupture in the same way that ecofeminists have been pointing out our dire mistake in solely focusing on an anthropocentric agenda.

This is also a feminist proposal from the global South, with traditions of thought of feminist economy and ecofeminism that are quite different from those from the North. In this paper, we confirm our commitment to an epistemological revolution and uphold a vision from the South.

Furthermore, the feminist movements and our larger group of actors seeking a system change need to be in continuous exchange with other social movements and diverse voices to expand and deepen our collective project. I am thinking particularly of Indigenous Peoples to unlock different understandings of the planetary boundaries agenda along with centring many other voices. This small note about the present feminist proposal has to be understood as well as a humble invitation for an expansive dialogue that is enriched in an ongoing manner.

## **THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

One of these alternatives is the Right to Development, which recognises the importance of aiming at sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and autonomy in the global South. It is a transformational framing, so it has been criticised from many fronts, especially in discourses from the global North and elites. This agenda has been distorted through calls within the climate change spaces for dismantling the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) under the argument of “urgency” and recent efforts by global South countries to explore their own resources to ensure the provision of energy, livelihoods, employment, land and resources for their own populations. In short, developed countries in the UNFCCC negotiations claim that we don’t have time to wait for CBDR to be implemented because of the urgency: all countries need to do their share – all have to step in, in whatever small ways possible. This is also part of the tricky premise of the Paris Agreement, in which all countries need to deliver voluntary contributions. The *Right to Development* has also been contested in the climate space by developed countries as if it were a pretext by

developing countries to not deliver on their commitments. But this of course aims to avoid commitments to CBDR and “fair shares”.

## **BOX 12**

### **THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

The “Declaration on the Right to Development”, adopted on 04 December 1986, states in articles 1 and 2 that

“The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized” and that

“The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights, the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources”

(OHCHR, 1986).

Aligned to these calls seeking to reject the Right to Development are proposals to remove subsidies to fossil fuels across the board entirely, or to immediately halt the extraction of oil and carbon in the global South, without bearing in mind the complex dynamics that take place on the ground: that mega projects both of fossils, carbon and renewables set in global South territories are only meant to cover the provision of imperial needs of the global North (Hamouchene and Sandwell, 2023). Calling for the eradication of the Right to Development because “every country needs to keep fossil fuels in the ground” dismisses historical responsibilities, atmospheric colonisation and the obscene degree of unequal exchange that continues to take place. A principle of fair shares needs to be applied here, with rapid acceleration of measures to transition out of fossil fuel economies in the global North, and a planned transition for those in the global South. Therefore, from a feminist, anti-colonial and anti-imperial framing of planetary boundaries, there is a need to uphold and revitalise the Right to Development, serving the present needs of those who are railing against the harm of the unequal exchange, extraction and appropriation. This would mean that the Right to Development should not be used to follow the same extractivist path that global

North countries have shown, nor to continue the dynamics of unequal exchange, transferring all the resources to wealthy countries. Instead, a planned provision for local populations should be prioritised, with a short, medium and long-term view, ensuring a transition that is environmentally effective, procedurally fair, socially just, globally equitable, and technologically inclusive (Shaw and De Beukelaer, 2022). And clearly, this notion also means defining our own feminist notion of “development” that is clearly detached from developmentalist views based on profiting, extraction, and accumulation, or that aim to emulate the pathways of global North countries as an example for global South countries.

The Right to Development is an entry point to rethink the notion of development itself in the current context and within the logic of planetary boundaries. And with a feminist lens, it is crucial to add the dimension of sustainability of life, recognising the field of social reproduction, bearing in mind the sexual division of labour, the inequality of time use and the subsidy that women provide to the world through unpaid domestic and care work. Moreover, the radical feminist proposition of placing life over capital implies a whole reconfiguration of the notion of development, centred on people’s needs, wellbeing and interests and the planet’s health. With an anti-imperial and anti-colonial logic, this feminist proposal also aims to seek the reimagination of the social and ecological contract, in which a post-extractive stage becomes a reality for the global South.

## **POST-EXTRACTIVISM FOR THE SOUTH, DEGROWTH FOR THE NORTH**

The plurality in the global South has clearly shown how many proposals have been operating on the ground for centuries, with local practices adapted to different realities and ensuring the quality of life at the community level. This is especially true for many lifestyles that focus more on the relational dimension of life, both within the social and ecological fields, like *Buenvivir*, (Villalba, 2013; Benalcázar and Ullán de La Rosa, 2021) *Sumak Kawsay* (Pachamama Alliance, n.d.; Cuestas-Caza, 2022), and *Ubuntu* (Tamale, 2020: 139-147). This invites us to think more broadly about a promising future for the global South in a paradigm that escapes the logic of extractivism.

On the other hand, the global North needs to rethink its own lifestyle, material impact, and criminal abuse of power. The proposal of a degrowth strategy becomes relevant and needs to be implemented under careful but urgent planning. Despite some provincialism in various degrowth circles (Schmelzer and Nowshin, 2023), degrowth needs to be seen as a strategy and an end in and of itself for the global North (Reyes, 2024a, b, c).

In another series of papers, I have detailed why degrowth also needs to be a strategy to tackle the concentration of wealth globally. Degrowth also should be an imperative for harmful economic sectors and activities (Reyes, 2024b), both in the North and the South. In the bigger picture, there cannot be any strategy in the global North that does not centre its negative extraterritorial impacts, both past and present. Models like doughnut economics<sup>30</sup> are not enough: isolating a society, a country or a territory within the framework of its own bubble leaves aside the primitive accumulation that lies underneath the current economic unity discussed in the model. The model is novel and important in highlighting the relation between economy and planetary boundaries, as well as key elements of the social dimension. However, the field of social reproduction, as well as the past and present colonial and imperial dynamics, and the unequal exchange logics, are entirely absent from the doughnut economics proposal.

Furthermore, it has to be said that when I mention degrowth, I am detaching myself from those proposals that only remain in the field of economies of survival. Rather, when I say degrowth for the North (or for concentration of wealth or harmful sectors) I am referring to efforts to dismantle structures of power at the macro, mezzo and micro level, and to build new realities in those same dimensions. Global North authors who insist on mirroring proposals from the global South without recognising their positionality and that of structural sources of power are in reality dismantling possibilities for powerful struggles.

## **SYSTEMIC REPARATIONS**

Regarding the global justice agenda, the global North needs to acknowledge the harm done to the world and engage in a deep and profound process of reparations for the global South and specific communities that have been on the receiving end of the genocidal and ecocidal impacts of this centuries-long growthist bloody drive. Reparations need to be seen not on a case-by-case basis but as a systemic piece of global justice. However, this paper believes that reparations are not the main pillar for structural transformation, but a piece of a larger puzzle that aims to dismantle the current system and build a new one.

A significant debate on the role of reparations is also evolving. For some, reparations are a key starting point to address the harm that is still fresh and alive and are seen as a condition for global justice. For others, even by addressing historical and structural issues like racism, slavery, or ecological debt, the mainstream notion of reparations remains embedded in the field of reformist proposals that rely on the methods of the current system to tackle internal practices including by critically examining known

demands, such as those made by the CARICOM/AU's (African Union, n.d.; Caricom Reparations Commission, n.d.) among others (Andrews, 2024). An interesting proposal to bridge these two views is suggested by Ndongo Samba Sylla et al. (2024), which is to aspire to what they have termed “systemic reparations”, that require the transformation of the system and the dismantling of the structures that caused the harm in the first place, with a deep concern for the wellbeing of those who have been at the centre of the harm, while seeking a transformation that is sound for the people, the countries and the world that we live in. This is an alive conversation that should concern us all, as we search for deeper ways to achieve justice and transformation that truly lead to system change. For many of us, feminists of the tradition of rupture, this analysis is coherent with the proposals we align with.

## **WE HAVE A SAY IN UNDERSTANDING AND SHAPING AN UPCOMING “COLLAPSE”**

Given the current state of harm to the entire biosphere system, an anthropocentric, that is, a humanity-made (and very likely man-made too) collapse can be foreseen in the immediate future. A collapse that will be derived from overshooting the safe zones of the planetary boundaries beyond key tipping points, to the point of no return. This is why many discourses<sup>31</sup> are starting to explore post-growth.<sup>32</sup> A collapse could occur under two very different scenarios. Either through a devastating chain of micro-mezzo and macro disasters, reaching a collapse because the growthist ideology destroyed life as we know it, without any effort strong enough to shift away from the violent logics of extraction, accumulation and destruction. This collapse would lead us to a post-growth period because there would be no possible room to grow: we would have destroyed the possibility of regeneration of life cycles in the biosphere.

A different collapse would result from the victory of the sum of all dreams and efforts, social movements and progressive actors that managed to steer the current material practices at the micro (personal and collective, communitarian and territorial), mezzo (institutional and state level), or macro (systemic and global dynamics also rooted in a never-ending pattern at all levels). This victory can also be shaped as *our* collapse: the collapse that we wanted to bring about, the collapse of the current capitalist, colonial, imperial system of unequal exchange, exploitative of women, communities, Indigenous Peoples, and a long list of population groups that suffer multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, along with exploitation of the biosphere system. In either case, there is a need to think beyond this current era of the Anthropocene (Pavid, n.d.) or, more accurately, the era of the Capitalocene (Moore, 2017) and prepare for a post-growth stage.

## BOX 13

### ANTHROPOCENE OR CAPITALOCENE ERA?

The *Anthropocene* era is “characterized as the time in which the collective activities of human beings (*Homo sapiens*) began to substantially alter Earth’s surface, atmosphere, oceans, and systems of nutrient cycling. A growing group of scientists argue that the Anthropocene Epoch should follow the Holocene Epoch (11,700 years ago to the present) and begin in the year 1950. The name *Anthropocene* is derived from Greek and means the “recent age of man”.

(Rafferty, 2025)

In contrast, Jason Moore (2017) argues that the use of the *Anthropocene* era is misguided, since it removes the focus of the role of Capitalism in the impacts on nature: “Capitalocene, understood as a system of power, profit and re/production in the web of life”. This notion is introduced to clarify that the ecological breakdown is not necessarily caused by the presence of humans per se in the planet, but it is caused by a specific economic system.

This means that it is either *their* collapse, the collapse on *their* terms, the collapse driven by criminal elites, or *our* collapse, the collapse on *our* terms, the one driven towards a dismantling of the current system and the reimagining of a new one. In either case, it is a world after the growth era.

What does that look like? The feminist movement has shown us new ways of thinking about these pathways. In the face of accumulation dynamics, the feminist movement has proposed an alternative vision to the growthist logic of the economy, raising the tension between two main dimensions, in what has been called “capital versus life”.<sup>33</sup> Capital vs life emphasises that the current capitalist neoliberal system prioritises capital accumulation, with all that it entails, rather than highlighting the centrality of the sustainability of life, which should also be extended to convey the integrity and the rhythms of the biosphere (Herrero, 2016). In this sense, the feminist lens poses questions: what is the value of wealth and wealth accumulation in the face of the value of the wellbeing of people and the planet? What is the life that is worth living (including the tension of the traditional notion of “employment” and the feminist problematising of the concept of labour) as opposed to the usual “worth” assigned in the monetised economy? In this discussion, the feminist lens highlights elements that are usually not valued, such as nature, the sphere of social reproduction, and in a

generalised manner the lives, time and labour of those who have been most exploited, with women at the centre of many of these groups suffering multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It also problematises the commodification of lives and of nature, and the fact that some specific relations with/of life are understood as disposable in the eyes of the industry of capital.

## **CAPITAL VERSUS LIFE**

The “capital versus life” framing allows us to show how capital dynamics have been naturalised, without being broadly questioned. Entire generations of humans and the very balance of the biosphere system are being sacrificed to ensure that the cycle of capital accumulation continues, along with the many tools used from micro to macro levels. This is the case, for instance, for debt, from the individual to the country level, and the power dynamics being imposed between lenders (with the club of rich countries, or private actors) and borrowers. The analysis of capital versus life lifts the veil from many obscene dynamics taken for granted, including the financialisation of life, which governments and development agencies regularly promote.

The logic of capital is actually anti-economic,<sup>34</sup> in the sense that it will end up destroying the entire system that feeds economic material practices and the reproduction of life. In another paper, I highlighted that analysts have pointed out the self-devouring drive of the growthist capitalist paradigm (Reyes, 2024a), exhausting materials and resources beyond the point of replenishment. Furthermore, with capital accumulation, every dimension of life has become financialised. Measures that used to fall under the State’s responsibility, such as health, education, housing, and social protection, are now being swept away under the hardened discourse of austerity (in former times called structural adjustment and now presented under the flashy name of “fiscal consolidation”). In turn, public finances are relegated to blended finance instruments and to opening the door for privatisation. The perverse cycle of austerity has been pointed out strongly by the feminist movement since the 1980s. Yet, it continues to wreak havoc with the World Bank and the IMF as their main proponents, applying hardened measures to limit any other choice for governments. Austerity narrows the fiscal space of any government, so that any expense that could be allocated to the reproduction of life (including climate action and loss and damage) is destined to disappear. So much so that some feminists now refer to “austericide” and “austericide policies”, to emphasise the deadly aspect of these anti-economic and anti-life measures (Agenjo-Calderón, 2023; Muñoz and Rodríguez-Modrono, Forthcoming 2026).<sup>35</sup>

This is to say, we are not only talking about an ill-placed economic policy (austerity) or specific angles of an economic crisis (debt). We are referring to the larger attack against life by the current economic system, which is articulated in every nefarious economic dynamic at play. Amaia Pérez would remind us that Antonella Picchio refers to capitalism is an “economy of death”, and that Yayo Herrero defines it as a system moved by a “biocide logic” (Pérez Orozco, 2014: 120). In other spaces, I myself have referred to the genocidal and ecocidal impacts of this capitalistic system (Reyes, 2024a, b, c).

## **THE TENSION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE**

The tension between capital versus life questions the very premise of the neoliberal notion of the “individual” that lives an isolated, independent, and autonomous life. This fantasised life promotes the illusion that everything can be bought, without realising that it relies on the creation of more inequalities and more extreme power imbalances: those who get to live the “individual” life are the ones who, in reality, are living off the subsidy (and exploitation) of many others. With this, it becomes a priority for us, under this lens, to reinstate the primacy of collectivity<sup>36</sup> and inherent nets and webs of relations that bind us all together and within the larger biosphere system.

Part of the solution lies in recognising the power of collective rights gained in international law under the Human Rights framework by workers and Indigenous Peoples. It is the nature of these collective rights that have been eroded so far, but at the same time, through this collective recognition of rights, we need to push the boundaries much more. The ecological harm is evidence that the human rights framework we know has remained in the confines of a neoliberal and individual understanding. We need an expanded understanding of collective rights to realise that our rights cannot be individualised when entire communities and countries are wiped from the face of the planet, or that entire ecosystems are destroyed for the interests of the few. This is also part of the “green job debate”, about only shifting workers from one sector to another. The “green job” debate is dismantling our capacity to think further about the possibilities of collective articulation and action.

We should now be aiming at a revolution in the human rights framework. One in which it is placed at the service of the larger structural challenges of our times, with effective and real solutions for our collectivity and our surroundings. In the same way that the agenda of reparations in its systemic dimension invites us to think beyond the case-by-case lens, the human rights framework needs to deliver both at the level of the differentiated needs of population groups while also tackling the structural roots that

led to human rights violations in the first place. The process also needs to allow us to imagine the world we want collectively, not in an isolated manner.

This also reconfigures the way we conceive the State itself. Indeed, it can become a captured space for capital accumulation, but ideally, it can also be part of a renewed social contract. The State can either be on the side of monopoly capital or the side of life. It can be on the side of this revolution to support legal, programmatic and budgetary frameworks upholding this complex understanding of collectivity, or on the side of scarcity and pauperization of people while degrading the planet. In a new social contract, we would expect to have a State that recognises how important it is to emphasise “investment” in public services, social protection, and in the broader manner, social reproduction, while eradicating the sexual division of labour and the extractive relation to nature and to the exploitation of labour and time. These last elements are crucial. Many heterodox economists end their analysis by calling for social investment and dignifying employment. However, structural feminists have emphasised for years that without dismantling the sexual division of labour, the “left” is just calling for a new era of exploitation of women under a Keynesian lens. Amaia Pérez Orozco, would be so bold as to say that the welfare state is the product of a pact between the capitalists and the workers to oppress women and relegate them to the domestic sphere, due to the largely ignored issue of social reproduction and the role of primitive extraction (Pérez Orozco, 2014: 123). The sexual division of labour has always been a pillar of the State, as Naila Kabeer (1994) and other feminist economists have been saying for years.

## **DELINKING FROM CAPITALISM, IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM**

A broad project of emancipation still requires centring an agenda of sovereignty, self-sufficiency and autonomy for the global South. This means that no possible “development” can unfold for these countries while they continue to be under the grip of global North countries, monopoly capital and harmful economic dynamics prioritising capital over life. I have already mentioned that I envision a post-extractive future for the global South, while the path towards a post-growth world would imply that the global North would carry out its transit with a degrowth plan. But how is this transition possible? I am convinced the answer is delinking.

Delinking is a proposal that was framed by the thinkers of the dependency theory tradition. Mostly developed by Samir Amin (1987), it recognizes the trap of “development” for global South countries and defines the power relations in the global sphere in terms of core and periphery. There is no real intention to “develop” countries

in the periphery because the core countries rely on their exploitation to maintain their own status. The world order is made to keep them in the conditions they are in, and every economic dynamic (whether this be taxation, or debt, or trade, or any other) maintains a logic of domination and oppression of periphery countries. Whatever solution there is, it has to be found outside the system. It has to be found by delinking from the system.

Delinking is an aim (to be thoroughly delinked) but also a strategy to achieve that aim. Meaning, delinking as a strategy recognises that economic dynamics have specific ways to “tie in” periphery countries, so there is a possibility to map those ties and gradually loosen them, untie them, or expand the scope of action within those ties. Those ties also happen simultaneously, and therefore there could be a complex multi-approach, in which many fronts are tackled depending on the specific material conditions and alliances facing them. No isolated country or region from the South can face the system, but the alliance of different actors of the global South, including alliances of countries, sub-regions and regions, can make a difference in terms of the possibility to negotiate and bargain better conditions.

The delinking strategy aspires to expand the sovereign space for territories on the ground. This is why States are key actors in the macroeconomic sphere (if not, who will engage in processes to carry out progressive and autonomous taxation while regulating and eradicating corporate tax abuse? Or who will have the capacity to face the challenges that monopoly capital is bringing to this world, beyond the capacities of dialogue that small communities may have in their immediate realities?). Delinking also seeks to promote a multi-polar world, in which there is not one single empire or a series of connected imperial actors, but a space in which power is held among many, with a possibility of contestation. But States are not the sole actors of the delinking strategy. They are just one of the many key pieces to enhance self-sufficiency and autonomy at the territorial level. Social movements, Indigenous Peoples, organised civil society, trade unions, local communities, and many more, have a specific and unique role to play.

As can be seen, a delinking project pushes us to go beyond resistance to a more proactive endeavor. Many points of entry can be enacted in a project such as this one, carrying out and promoting the conditions to expand solidarity trade, artisanal mining, food sovereignty. As can be seen, the delinking project requires cross-movement alliances. Only, this time a macro lens presents itself as a road and horizon. Not to dismiss the micro and the mezzo, but because the micro and the mezzo need a compass that is larger than our current times. Moreover, because the micro and the mezzo are the most important components, a macro lens is needed.

Delinking from what? From capitalism. From imperialism. From colonialism. From the global North. From monopoly capital.

Delinking, as other heterodox economic proposals, suggests that we return to the “real economies”, those that are at the territorial level. Those that are composed of industrial projects that deliver for the people in their immediate needs, to generate the conditions of life.

There is not enough room in this paper to expand on delinking as a goal or as a strategy, and what I have explained here is a very rough draft of a complex proposal. Suffice it to say that in the current world we need to continue thinking and generating our own feminist notion and project of delinking. A feminist delinking project joins the dream of sovereign, self-sufficient and autonomous global South territories. Moreover, it recognises that this cannot be done at the expense of women or the biosphere. This is why we contest the notion of “real economies”, because in the end those fall under the unsaid or silent condition of a permanent subsidy relying on the sexual division of labour. Or of permanent ecological exploitation. Our feminist delinking prioritises the generations of the conditions for ensuring and caring for the materiality of life. I speak in plural because within the feminist movement, we believe in the collective generation of knowledge. At this moment, a delinking project is starting to be one of those dreams shaped by collective minds and hearts.<sup>37</sup> In a larger lens, this would take us to discuss the need to reform the global financial architecture, which at this moment is at the service of capital but should be reconceived in its entirety to be at the service of life.

As can be seen, there are many alternatives for the current economic system, and these are within reach of all of us, even if they face great obstacles. The answer, as always, is in the collective mobilisation and a bold recognition of our joint potential. It requires us to be fearless, but also to be moved with much love. A love that goes beyond the usual understandings and finds its greatest channels through imagination and radical possibilities. An internationalist of dreamers for new possibilities. If not now, when? If not us, who?

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# NOTES

- 1- The Planetary Boundaries are the safe limits for human survival. The nine critical processes or boundaries together maintain a stable and resilient Earth and include: Climate change, Novel entities, Stratospheric ozone depletion, Atmospheric aerosol loading, Ocean acidification, Modification of biogeochemical flows, Freshwater change, Land system change and Biosphere integrity. For more information on the nine Planetary Boundaries and their status, see: <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>
- 2- Specifically, two articles of Paris Agreement: Art. 9 on New Collective Quantifiable Climate Finance Goal (NCQG) and Art 2.1.(c) on financial flows consistency with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate-resilient development, as well as Art. 53 of Paris Agreement Decision that sets the mandate of the NCQG
- 3- See Pérez Orozco, A. (2014)
- 4- To see more about the way growth has permeated the entire economic policy logics, see Matthias Schmelzer (2016). *The Hegemony of Growth. The OECD and the making of the economic growth paradigm.*
- 5- For a thorough introduction of this discipline, see Spash (2017). *Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics. Nature and Society.* The Introduction states that Ecological economics “was founded upon the importance of placing the economy within its biophysical limits, while recognising the need for the conduct of human society to respect others both present and future, human and non-human” (Spash, 2017: 3.)
- 6- To see more about growth as an ideology, and the different criticisms on growth as a fetish, an ideology, an obsession, or an imaginary, see Schmelzer (2016) and Borowy and Schmelzer (2017).
- 7- For more detailed discussion of financialisation, see the paper in this series by Lena Lavinas (2025)
- 8- CO<sub>2</sub> is a “gas naturally produced by animals during respiration and through decay of biomass and used by plants during photosynthesis. Although it only constitutes 0.04 percent of the atmosphere, it is one of the most important greenhouse gases. The combustion of fossil fuels is increasing carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere, which is believed to be contributing to global warming”. (European Environment Agency, n.d.)
- 9- “Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are nontoxic, nonflammable chemicals containing atoms of carbon, chlorine, and fluorine. They are used in the manufacture of aerosol sprays, blowing agents for foams and packing materials, as solvents, and as refrigerants.” (Elkins, 1999)
- 10- “DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) was developed as the first of the modern synthetic insecticides in the 1940s. It was initially used with great effect to combat malaria, typhus, and the other insect-borne human diseases among both military and civilian populations. It also was effective for insect control in crop and livestock production, institutions, homes, and gardens. DDT’s quick success as a pesticide and broad use in the United States and other countries led to the development of resistance by many insect pest species.” (United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.-a)
- 11- “Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) is a highly reactive gas composed of three oxygen atoms. It is both a natural and a man-made product that occurs in the Earth’s upper atmosphere” (United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.-b)
- 12- For more on different catastrophic scenarios with estimation of different timelines, see: Renée Cho (2021). “How close are we to climate tipping points”, State of the Planet, 11 November, 2021, in: <https://news.columbia.edu/2021/11/11/how-close-are-we-to-climate-tipping-points/>; Kemp et al. (2022) “Climate Endgame: Exploring catastrophic climate change scenarios”, PNAS, August 1, 2022, in: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2108146119>; June-Yi Lee and Jochem Marotzke et al. (2021), “Future Global Climate: Scenario-based Projections and Near-term Information”, Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, pp. 553-672, in: [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_Chapter04.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Chapter04.pdf); Jeff Tollefson (2023). “Catastrophic change looms as Earth nears climate ‘tipping points’, report says”, December 6, 2023, Nature, in: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-03849-y>
- 13- Samir Amin used to refer to monopoly capital. As Denisse Vélez (a Mexican Feminist Economist) stated in a personal communication, monopoly capital refers to the logic in which capital accumulation has a historical component that reinforces the terms of unequal exchange. Capital acquires monopolistic characteristics as it concentrates and centralises capital in the centres (as in Centre-Periphery) through multinational corporations that place obstacles to the development of other companies in the peripheries. This is done through imposing rules of exchange that generate monetary and fiscal dependencies, thereby impeding sovereign and autonomous processes in the global South which in turn reinforce and ensure the imperial imposition.
- 14- A just and equitable energy transition is a component of a large just and equitable transition. For the latter notion, see War on Want (2019). “A Just(ice) Transition is a Post-Extractive Transition. Centering the extractive frontier in climate justice” [https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/Post-Extractivist\\_Transition\\_WEB\\_0.pdf](https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/Post-Extractivist_Transition_WEB_0.pdf)
- 15- The issue of multipolarity is nuanced, but there is not enough space in this paper to examine this in detail. The issue of China can be used as an example. On the one hand it has to be said that China has not surpassed its carbon budget. On the other, it has expanded its commercial ties within what has been called South-South cooperation. its problematic role is indeed evident in its strong presence across Africa as a creditor with predatory clauses for mega projects. These actions have implications on the ecological integrity agenda). At the same time, (with all its nuances) China is playing a very welcome role in expanding a multipolar world, holding the ground for the G77 in many processes, and providing commercial alternatives for Global South governments, including providing the opportunity to trade in different currencies. It is also positive to see that in principle China enjoys a certain technology autonomy which is crucial given that new digital monopolies are dominating every multilateral decision-making space.
- 16- See the discussion on deep sea mining, led by DAWN (DAWN, 2020). See also Slatter and Penjueli (2025) “Peace Under-Sea Siege: How Critical Minerals Could Pull The Trigger to Mine The Ocean Floor?”, a DAWN/PANG policy brief
- 17- Jason Hickel refers to process of atmospheric colonization, in which a “small number of high-income countries have appropriated substantially more than their fair share of the atmospheric commons. Just as many of these countries have relied on the appropriation of labour and resources from the Global South for their own economic growth, they have also relied on the appropriation of global atmospheric commons, with consequences that harm the Global South disproportionately”. See Hickel (2020b). “Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: an equality-based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary”, The Lancet Planetary Health, Volume 4, Issue 9, September 2020, Pages e399-e404, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2542519620301960#bib19>
- 18- To follow more closely the discussions during the climate hearings at the ICJ, see the different threads shared by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) (2024) during the two weeks of the hearings. Examples of social media messages include: <https://x.com/lienvandamme/status/1866092596528898432?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA>; <https://x.com/duycks/status/1865417065789591600?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA>; [https://x.com/ciel\\_tweets/status/1867245405840560282?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA](https://x.com/ciel_tweets/status/1867245405840560282?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA) [Accessed 20 April. 2025]
- 19- See the remarkable work produced by CIEL to monitor and analyse the discussions during the hearings, but also their factsheets and briefing

in counterarguing big polluters and wealthy countries that were attempting to undermine their legal obligations, in: [https://x.com/ciel\\_tweets/status/1868980964204200133?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA](https://x.com/ciel_tweets/status/1868980964204200133?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA)

20- See: <https://x.com/duycks/status/186784410836201763?s=46&t=1wkdCgMgbAZOWiZg8aJ9kA> [Accessed 20 April. 2025]

21- The OECD (2022) has argued that this commitment was met in 2022 (See: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/climate-finance-and-the-usd-100-billion-goal.html#:~:text=Released%20on%2029%20May%202024,goal%20for%20the%20first%20time> ). However, for this commitment to have been met, USD100 billion annually would have indeed been delivered since 2010. In the climate finance negotiations, developed countries insist that with this OECD report there is no need to continue mentioning that the climate commitment has not been met. Which is of course a very twisted interpretation of events.

22- For more on the issue of inflation, see Greenfield and Noor (2024). “Cop29 deal fails to consider inflation so is not tripling of target, economists say”, The Guardian, 25 November, 2024, in: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/nov/25/cop29-deal-fails-consider-inflation-not-tripling-target-economists> ; also see and social media tweet <https://x.com/CANIntl/status/1860869060713410563>

23- For a thorough review of the negotiation process as well as of the text of the NCQG, see (UNCC, n.d.-f; TWN, 2024). “Weak finance mobilization goal of USD 300 billions per year by 2035”, TWN Baku Climate News Update No.16, 29 November 2024, Published by Third World Network, in: <https://twn.my/title2/climate/info.service/2024/cc241118.htm>

24- This is an issue that has been tracked for many years by civil society. See for instance (FOEI) et al. (2012) and ESCR-NET (2021) <https://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Statement-on-UN-Corporate-Capture-EN.pdf>, and <https://www.escr-net.org/resources/corporate-capture-of-the-united-nations/>

25- See for instance: Ndongo Samba Sylla (2023). “Imperialism and Global South’s Debt: Insights From Modern Monetary Theory, Ecological Economics, and Dependency Theory,” Research in Political Economy, in: Imperialism and the Political Economy of Global South’s Debt, volume 38, pages 193-222, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

26- See for instance: Hickel et al. (2022), “National responsibility for ecological breakdown: a fair-shares assessment of resource use, 1970–2017”, The Lancet Planetary Health, Volume 6, Issue 4, April 2022, Pages e342-e349., <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2542519622000444>

27- See also the report published by the Transnational Institute on the financialization of international investment law (Klarwein, 2025)

28- See for instance: United Nations (2023). “Second Committee Approves Three Resolutions, Including Text Demanding Israel Cease Exploitation of Natural Resources in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syrian Golan” in United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 9 November 2023, in <https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaef3594.doc.htm>; or Al Jazeera (2024). “UN demands Israel end occupation of Palestine: How did your country vote?”, Aljazeera, 19 September 2024, in <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/19/un-demands-israel-end-occupation-of-palestine-how-did-your-country-vote>

29- See for instance: Johana Oksala (2018). “Feminism, Capitalism and Ecology”, Hypatia, Vol. 33, no. 2, Spring 2018.

30- This is a theoretical framework devised by Kate Raworth (2012) and further developed in her book “Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist” (Raworth, 2018). The main idea is to ensure basic human needs (conceived as social boundaries) are taken care of, while at the same time remaining in the safe zones of planetary boundaries.

31- See for instance the work of Paul Schenderling (2022). *‘There Is Life After Growth’*. Post Growth Netherlands. Available at: <https://vu-nl.libcal.com/event/4074480> and Platform DSE (n.d.). *Sustainable and Solidarity Economy*. Available at: <https://platformdse.org/over-pdse/>

32- Post-growth is a notion closely related to degrowth, but pretends to be less straightforward, and rather than emphasising the “negative” aspect of the reduction of the economy, highlights that there is a “life after growth” (which is the name of Paul Schenderling’s 2022 book). It is a notion that wants to portray the “day after” scenario, or the way in which societies will benefit in a world without growth. See Slingerland et al. (2024). *Analysing the Beyond Growth Debate*. TNO Available at: <https://publications.tno.nl/publication/34643121/7z1GNV3i/TNO-2024-R11088-summary.pdf> - especially the segment on ‘Post-growth’, on page 38.

33- See Amaia Pérez Orozco (2014). *Subversión feminista de la economía. Aportes para un debate sobre el conflicto capital-vida*. Traficantes de Sueños. Available at: [https://traficantes.net/sites/default/files/pdfs/Subversi%C3%B3n%20feminista%20de%20la%20econom%C3%ADa\\_Traficantes%20de%20Sue%C3%B1os.pdf](https://traficantes.net/sites/default/files/pdfs/Subversi%C3%B3n%20feminista%20de%20la%20econom%C3%ADa_Traficantes%20de%20Sue%C3%B1os.pdf) - especially chapter 2, “El ataque del capital a la vida”, Traficantes de Sueños, Mapas, May 2014.

34- See especially Amaia Pérez Orozco (2014) chapter 2: “El ataque del capital a la vida”.

35- Amaia Pérez Orozco (2014) is one of those authors, following the line of Astrid Ajenjo-Calderón (2023 and Lina Gálvez Muñoz (Muñoz and Rodríguez-Modrono, Forthcoming 2026).

36- See Sylvia Tamale (2020). *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* - especially her discussions on the human rights framework and family life. Indigenous People’s activists also emphasize this dimension when expanding on their views; for instance, Tarcila Rivera, an indigenous woman from Peru (see <https://fimi-iiwf.org/en/asamblea/tarcila-rivera-zea-2/> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VBw7EPeXC8&ab\\_channel=UNRISD](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VBw7EPeXC8&ab_channel=UNRISD)) or Taily Terena, from the Amazonia in Brazil (<https://www.synchronicityearth.org/author/tterena/> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQFg5bM\\_QB8&ab\\_channel=TVInd%C3%ADgena](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQFg5bM_QB8&ab_channel=TVInd%C3%ADgena)).

37- In particular, a group of feminists from the global South are embarking in a project to think about a feminist delinking project. It is still a loose group of people and in time will have an occasion to speak more of this work in public in a collective manner. In some moments some of them have got together to come out in public actions, under the name of South Feminist Solidarity (See for instance Campaign of Campaigns (n.d.) <https://www.campaignofcampaigns.com/index.php/en/our-work/actions/362-solidarious-support-and-resources-to-the-palestinian-feminist-and-human-rights-grassroots-led-civil-society-groups-working-inside-and-beyond-palestine>). I am indebted to them about the reflections on this segment.

## AUTHOR



**Emilia Reyes** is a Mexican feminist activist working on global justice, aiming at an emancipation of the global South while carrying out a feminist revolution that is mindful of the biosphere's integrity.



DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES  
WITH WOMEN FOR A NEW ERA