Unraveling the colonialities of climate change and action

(Introduction to the Special Section on *The colonialities of climate change and action*)

Nelsa De la Hoz[1], Diego Silva-Garzón[2], Nathalia Hernández-Vidal[3], Laura Gutiérrez-Escobar[4],
Martina Hasenfratz[5], and Benno Fladvad[6] [*]

Abstract

In this introduction to the special section on the *Colonialities of climate change and action* we provide a conceptual mapping that can help us engage critically with existing approaches to thinking and acting in the context of climate change. We carry out this exercise inspired by Latin American decolonial and political ecology scholarship, as well as by Farhana Sultana's notion of climate coloniality. In an effort to pluralize our understanding of climate coloniality, the articles we present in the special section reflect the diversity and interconnectedness of theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and activists' traditions on several continents. Beyond these contributions, we make a call to further pluralize our understanding of the colonialities of climate change and action, taking into consideration different intellectual strands of postcolonial thought, subaltern studies, and decolonization, including those that engage critically with them.

Keywords

Climate change, climate coloniality, green colonialism, extractivism, Latin American political ecology

1. Opening a critical South–North dialogue

This special section is the result of an ongoing collaboration and vital exchange between researchers and activists from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and the US. It began with an online theme week on *Land and food struggles in Latin America* in October 2021 and culminated in the online conference *"Climate coloniality": Mechanisms, epistemologies, spaces of resistance* in November 2022, which was organized by the editors of this section. The starting point for this critical South–North dialogue, through which we sought to generate a reciprocal debate that embraces plural ways of thinking, shaping, and understanding the world, was the ambition to disentangle and better understand the intersection of climate change and action with colonial legacies and renewed colonialities. Thus, our focus lies not only on historical

[1] Nelsa De la Hoz, Independent Researcher, Colombia. Email: nelsadelahoz@gmail.com.

[2] Diego Silva-Garzón, Researcher, Centre for International Development Studies, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland. Email: diego.silva@graduateinstitute.ch.

[3] Nathalia Hernández-Vidal, Assistant Professor, College of Arts and Science, University of Oregon, USA. Email: nher@uoregon.edu.

[4] Laura Gutiérrez-Escobar, Assistant Professor, Instituto de Bioética, Facultad de Filosofía, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia. Email: lmgutierrez@javeriana.edu.co.

[5] Martina Hasenfratz, PhD Student, University of Hamburg, Germany. Email: martina.hasenfratz@uni-hamburg.de.

[6] Benno Fladvad, Assistant Professor, University of Hamburg, Germany. Email: benno.fladvad@uni-hamburg.de.

* The organization of this special section and the elaboration of this introduction is the result of a collective process. The contributions of all the authors were equally important. Therefore, this order of authorship should not be seen as hierarchical.

forms of colonialism but also on ongoing colonial relationships and forms of exploitation that do not emerge despite, but rather because of, decarbonization and climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. In this regard, critical scholars are increasingly pointing out that the consensus on capitalist-driven and techno-managerial climate solutions, such as electric cars or green (and blue) hydrogen, as well as geoengineering technologies or carbon offset mechanisms, increasingly lead to renewed North–South dependencies, socioecological conflicts, and the intensified exploitation of nature, particularly in the Global South. At the same time, these mechanisms perpetuate dominant power relations and allow businesses to be maintained as usual in industrialized regions and countries of the Global North (Andreucci *et al.*, 2023; Dunlap, 2021; Müller *et al.*, 2022; Voskoboynik & Andreucci, 2021). Ruth Nyambura, one of the keynote speakers of our conference and a member of the African Ecofeminists Collective, argues as follows regarding carbon offsetting: "There is no proof that carbon markets have contributed to a decrease in fossil fuel emissions globally but have merely shifted the burden of doing so to countries in the Global South. Carbon markets have allowed rich countries not only to continue polluting, but also to benefit financially from their pollution" (Nyambura, 2014).

Our intention with this special section is not to dismiss climate action per se or to deny the beneficial effects that technological solutions can have in combatting climate change; we certainly need climate and low-carbon technologies to avoid the most severe consequences of the climate crisis. Instead, one of our goals is to uncover the ways in which dominant climate strategies, particularly managerial and technoscientific approaches, are embedded in a specific sociohistorical setting and how they lead to uneven consequences for different groups of people, more-than-humans, and places. As Theodor W. Adorno (1980 [1972]), one of the leading figures of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, noted in a lecture in 1968, "One should not, as criticism always tempted to do, put the blame on technology […] and to engage in a kind of theoretical machine wrecking on an extended scale. It is not the technology that is the disaster, but its entanglement with the social conditions that surround it" (p. 362; free translation by the authors).

In 2024, this statement could hardly be more accurate. There is still too little critical engagement with the often unjust, exploitative, and neocolonial social relationships entangled with and perpetuated by prevalent technology-centered and market-driven sustainability and climate policies. In particular, we see the risk that these solutionist strategies may suppress and foreclose the debates around necessary and urgent systemic changes and *alternative sustainabilities* (Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2017). They also risk rendering invisible the colonial underpinnings and the slow violence of climate change and climate change policies, as they allow for maintaining a relatively good life for privileged groups—at least until now—while environmental burdens and social harms are displaced out of sight of capitalist centers. At the same time, the historical responsibilities of industrialized countries for causing climate change are largely obscured and concealed.

Therefore, the climate crisis urges us, as critical scholars, to unravel ongoing colonialities in climate change and action. It is precisely this that Farhana Sultana (2022), who gave the opening lecture of our conference, calls *climate coloniality*: "Climate coloniality is perpetuated through global land and water grabs, REDD+ programs, neoliberal conservations projects, rare earth mineral mining, deforestation for growth, fossil fuel warfare, and new green revolutions for agriculture – which benefit a few while dispossessing larger numbers of historically-impoverished communities, often elsewhere" (p. 4). According to Sultana (2022), climate coloniality is therefore expressed and experienced materially and viscerally, while it also represents an "epistemological site of struggle" (p. 6).

However, this struggle also brings forward and makes visible alternative and transformative visions of dealing with climate change. A broad array and growing number of anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, youth, urban, peasant, and indigenous movements demonstrate that the universalizing logics of dominant climate policies are not inescapable and without alternatives. In our conference, this was pointed out very clearly, especially by Ruth Nyambura, who gave insights into African eco-feminist movements and their anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, and anti-capitalist struggles for liberation. In a similar vein, transnational activist mobilizations were debated in a panel discussion, constituted by Francisca Fernández Droguett (Movimiento por el Agua y los Territorios, Chile), Elizabeth Mpofu (La Vía Campesina, Zimbabwe), Esteban Servat (Debt for Climate, Argentina), and Eva Maria Fjellheim (Saami Council, Norway), who gave us impressive insights into not only their local struggles and the challenges and dangers they are confronted with but also hope and inspiration. One

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of their key messages was that science-based climate policies and climate solutions should—however challenging this might be—value, embrace, and include the multiplicity of ways of being and relating to the Earth that communities worldwide have constructed for centuries.

Against this background, this themed section interrogates the mechanisms of domination of climate policies and action—paying attention to the material expressions, epistemologies, aesthetics, laws, and affects deployed in these processes—while examining spaces of resistance and generative collective action that advance justice agendas from below. As a prelude to this discussion, the following introductory considerations will do so from a Latin American political ecology perspective, which is informed by our positionalities and research experiences and by the fact that Latin America is currently one of the global hotspots for green extractivism and green colonialism. We hope that other authors speaking from different positionalities and intellectual genealogies will add to the debate in the future, pluralizing our understanding of the colonialities of climate change and action. Some of the authors in this special section contribute to this task with examples from Africa and South Asia.

2. Mapping climate coloniality

This introduction provides a conceptual mapping of the colonialities of climate change and action that can help us engage critically with existing approaches to thinking and acting in the context of climate change. In this section, we carry out this exercise inspired by Latin American decolonial and political ecology scholarship, as well as by Sultana's (2022) notion of climate coloniality. We first highlight some of the key ideas behind the concept of coloniality and its different dimensions (coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being). We then focus on the notion of the *coloniality of nature*, which offers an explanation of the ontological and epistemological basis that justifies the exploitation of certain natures and peoples in the modern/colonial world. Turning to the material, economic, and political mechanisms of uneven environmental exploitation and extractivism, we explore some key notions of Latin American political ecology. In particular, we present the notions of commodity consensus, decarbonization consensus, and green colonialism, which explain the plunder of natural resources in Latin America as a process driven by export-oriented markets and global elites. Crucial to the current historical juncture, these markets include raw materials and services for green industries that seek to decarbonize the economy and mitigate climate change. With this conceptual background in mind, we introduce the notion of climate coloniality, highlighting its potential to combine the ontological, epistemic, and political–economic ideas offered by these two strands of Latin American thought. Finally, we discuss how decolonial feminist ideas and collectives inspired the discussion on climate coloniality that led to the conference in November 2022 and to this special section, highlighting the role of generative and transgressive action.

From the coloniality of power to the coloniality of nature

The concept of coloniality was first coined by Anibal Quijano (1992), in close dialogue with Quijano and Wallerstein's (1992) world systems analysis. The latter describes the emergence of a transatlantic world system divided between central regions of power and wealth accumulation, and peripheral regions of extraction and exploitation. To highlight the role of race in the formation of this modern world system, Quijano introduced the term "coloniality of power" (1998, 1999, 2000), explaining how race helped shape the international division of labor and the hierarchization of social life in the Americas.

Inspired by the work of Quijano and anti-colonial Caribbean intellectuals, such as Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, Latin American scholars from various schools of thought (including dependency theory, participatory action research, and liberation theology) created the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality group and continued to develop the notion of coloniality. They point to additional social categories that were central in the formation of the modern/colonial world system. Race was accompanied by class, gender, and spirituality in the constitution of what they call a *colonial matrix of power*, through which former colonizers defined themselves as radically different from colonized populations to justify their domination (i.e., colonial difference).

Importantly, the notion of coloniality points to the fact that the colonial matrix of power did not disappear when the former colonies gained independence. Instead, coloniality refers to the discursive, epistemic, and material structures of exploitation that accompanied the emergence of the modern/colonial world and which continued to shape the social, economic, and political lives of previous colonies. Moreover, coloniality does not refer to processes that are limited to the realm of politics or economics. Instead, it is an embodied and lived experience that cuts across all dimensions of life. Accordingly, scholars, such as Quijano (1998), Mignolo (2011), and Castro-Gómez (2005), mobilized the notion of the *coloniality of knowledge* to account for the effects of coloniality in the realm of knowledge production. They argued that in the modern/colonial world system, Western knowledge has been privileged over other types of knowing and being in the world. The West is portrayed as the birthplace of the Enlightenment and scientific knowledge, whereas non-Western knowledge has been relegated to the realm of belief and mysticism.

Connected with this type of epistemic violence is the imposition of particular subjectivities that characterize the modern/colonial world. The notion of the *coloniality of being* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 1995; Wynter, 1995) refers to a process in which the lived experiences of marginalized populations are ignored and actively erased, while a particular set of hegemonic values, beliefs, and ways of life are imposed. Coloniality is therefore accompanied by the ontological negation of colonized peoples, including their humanity, autonomy, epistemic faculties, and ways of being and knowing in the world. A crucial aspect of the coloniality of being is the internalization of the colonial matrix of power by colonized peoples of the Global South, who become involved in the process of implementing and reproducing the relational subaltern hierarchies of the modern/colonial world.

Feminist decolonial scholars have also contributed to and reworked the concept of coloniality. In particular, María Lugones (2008) connects the concept of coloniality with the history of intersectional feminist thought to think about the logics of the colonial matrix of power. She coined the concept of the *modern-colonial gender system* to capture the "racialized, colonial, capitalist, heterosexualist gender oppression" of the current capitalist system (Lugones, 2011, p. 105). Through this concept, she rejects the concept of patriarchy in light of the tradition of White feminism in the US, which diverted attention from the intersectional nature of social hierarchization in the Western-dominated world.

The concept of coloniality has therefore expanded over the years, adding different dimensions to better describe the complexity of the modern/colonial world. In this introduction, we emphasize two different concepts that operate as critical analytical tools to understand how the modern/colonial system of domination relates to the more-than-human world: the coloniality of nature, developed by a strand of political ecology based on Latin American thought and action, and the already-mentioned concept of climate coloniality, to which we will return later. The way in which these natures are materially, epistemologically, and discursively shaped in order to be dominated is of central importance to the discussion of the causes and responses to global environmental crises.

The coloniality of nature refers to the essentialization of nature as a stable material space located outside and radically different from the human domain. The essentialization of nature allows for what Castro-Gómez (2005) calls *La hybris del punto cero*, a God-like point of view abstracted from any positionality, from which nature could be allegedly observed and objectively studied by the Western human mind. This God-like position was central to the positioning of scientific knowledge as a dominant form of knowledge and as a tool of imperial domination. Moreover, the essentialization of nature allows for the subsequent subordination of both nature and body to the human mind, a central factor behind Western pretensions of human exceptionalism (Braidotti, 2006). This subordination stems from naturalist Judeo-Christian traditions of thought, which have influenced mechanistic science and modern phallogocentrism (Escobar, 2007, p. 141). From this perspective, humans are superior to more-than-humans because only humans possess an interiority, sometimes defined as a soul and sometimes as a rational intellect, only sharing a physical exteriority with more-than-human beings (Descola, 2013). In the modern/colonial world, this argument has been mobilized to create an ontological and epistemological hierarchy in which the material world has less ontological weight than the world of the human mind and spirit.

Taken together, the nature/culture separation and the subordination of nature/body to the human mind justify the exploitation of nature by humanity. However, humanity is not monolithic. The coloniality of power does not assign the same degrees of humanity to all humans in the modern/colonial world, situating some human groups closer to the side of nature than to the side of culture. Furthermore, when the racial mechanisms of the hierarchization of the coloniality of power are extended to govern the spaces that racialized populations occupy in the world, the coloniality of power acquires a spatial dimension. Colombian scholar Juan Camilo Cajigas-Rotundo (2007) points out that the coloniality of power is also a form of biopower that "…not only produces subjectivities and territorialities, but also 'natures'" (p. 169). The way in which these natures are materially, epistemologically, and discursively shaped in order to be dominated is of central importance to the discussion of the causes and responses to global environmental crises. In the words of Escobar (2007), "Nature then appears at the other side of the colonial difference, with certain natures (colonial/third world natures, women's bodies, dark bodies) located in the exteriority to the Totality of the male eurocentric world" (p. 197). Through this process, some natures appear to imperial and capitalist elites as "a subaltern space, which can be exploited, devastated, and reconfigured, according to the needs of the current regimes of capitalist accumulation" (Alimonda, 2011, pp. 65–66). This allows certain locations, including the tropics, to be simultaneously denigrated as wild territory unfit for civilized life, while their biodiversity, water, minerals, and soils are appropriated for the benefit of the Euro-American world (Alimonda, 2011; Coronil, 2000).

In summary, the coloniality of nature describes the ontological, epistemological, and material tools and processes that justify and implement the subordination of colonized human and more-than-human worlds. We believe that this concept can contribute to the current debates on climate change thought and action. However, another strand of Latin American political ecology has carried out a different type of work, focusing on the material, economic, and political dimensions of North–South environmental relations. As we will discuss later, the concept of climate coloniality creates a fruitful space of dialogue for these two strands of thought in the context of climate change. Therefore, in the following subsection, we introduce some key concepts from this literature into our discussion.

Commodity consensus, decarbonization consensus, and green colonialism

Latin American political ecologists, working in close relation with activists and social movements, have contributed to the political economic analysis of the contemporary ways in which natures are produced and exploited in the Global South. This scholarship has mainly focused on the role of extractivism in deepening and expanding the spatial and territorial logics of capitalism and the modern/colonial world system, as well as on the role of international political processes in promoting consensus around the way Latin American territories should be governed and exploited.

Scholars such as Eduardo Gudynas and Maristella Svampa have analyzed the consequences of the Washington Consensus for regional political ecologies. On the one hand, Gudynas (2013) shows how it intensified long-standing forms of extractivism in the region, enabling and helping to create new forms of unequal ecological exchange.[7] This renewed model of extractivism is a process of returning Latin American economies to primary production (Gudynas, 2013), in which they are once again turned into suppliers of critical raw materials (minerals, cash crops, and intensive fishing) and infrastructure (ports, highways, and hydroelectric dams) that connect extractive enclaves with global markets. On the other hand, Svampa (2015) explains how the Washington Consensus allowed for the intensification of the plunder of resources through policies of state retreat. She characterizes the consensus as a set of neoliberal "policies of adjustment and privatization, which redefined the state as a metaregulating agent" (2015, p. 66). The redefinition of the state's role also created a political polarization in the region between the political right, which supported neoliberal policies of state retreat and corporate governance, and progressive movements that advocated for the return of the state as the central regulating figure of national political economies.

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[7] Unequal economic exchange is the idea that "economic growth in the 'advanced economies' of the global North relies on a large net appropriation of resources and labor from the global South, extracted through price differentials in international trade" (Hickel *et al.*, 2022).

Svampa (2015) argues that over the last decades, there has been a critical transition from the Washington Consensus to what she called the *commodity consensus*—a process centered on the large-scale export of raw materials (including those that are crucial for so-called green and sustainable economies) and the repositioning of the state in regulating and facilitating this process. For Svampa (2015), the commodity consensus creates a new political, economic, and spatial order that generates undoubted comparative advantages for the Global North, evidenced by economic growth indicators and increasing monetary reserves. On the downside, this process creates deep inequalities and new asymmetries in Latin American societies (Svampa, 2015); these are characterized by the concentration of wealth among the elites behind commodity exports (supported by both neoliberal and progressive governments in the region) and by the uneven distribution of environmental risks across most of the population.

Astrid Ulloa (2017, p. 71) connects the commodity consensus with the emergence of environmental scenarios of appropriation and dispossession based on hegemonic paradigms of sustainable development and green economies. In this light, activists and scholars are now conceptualizing this form of commodity extractivism as green and based on the dynamics of *accumulation by defossilization* (Slipak & Argento, 2022). Inspired by these developments, Latin American political ecologists have proposed the notion of a *decarbonization consensus* (Lang *et al.*, 2023; Svampa & Bringel, 2023), which Lang *et al.* (2023) describe as

> …a new global capitalist agreement that bets on changing the energy matrix based on fossil fuels to another matrix with no (or with reduced) carbon emissions, based in 'renewable' energies, and which condemns peripheral countries to be sacrifice zones, without changing the metabolic profile of society nor the predatory relationship with nature. (p. 51)

The decarbonization consensus advocates solutions based on new technologies, innovation, and financial mechanisms. It demands unlimited raw materials in the global race for energy security, adding an additional green layer to existing extractive pressures. It also operates by imposing certain formats of environmental conservation on the territories of the Global South in the context of carbon offsetting schemes while postponing needed structural changes in the polluting production processes of the Global North. Additionally, Sovacool *et al.* (2020) point out that the decarbonization consensus uses the territories of the Global South as dumping grounds for toxic and electronic waste generated through renewable energy sources. Simultaneously, the Global South is targeted as a new market for renewable technologies under unequal terms of trade in the global economy (Hickel *et al.*, 2022).

According to Lang *et al.* (2023), the decarbonization consensus is constitutive of green colonialism, which is a new twist to historic colonial patterns of resource extraction. Accompanied by the emergence of new critical environmental conditions, green colonialism mobilizes new justifications for economic and territorial control under the banner of saving the planet and decarbonizing the economy (Lang *et al.*, 2023). However, the logics of resource exploitation mobilized by green colonialism strongly resemble those that were present during colonial times, combining external intervention with internal alliances between elites from the Global North and South (Lang *et al.*, p. 30).

As a result, Latin American political ecologists returned to the concept of colonialism for the analysis of new models of exploitation of nature, but instead of relying on the notion of coloniality, which they saw as providing great attention to the discursive/subjective dimensions of North–South relations.[8] It is at this juncture that the notion of *climate coloniality* becomes relevant, as it brings the coloniality of knowledge, being, and nature back into the discussion (Sultana, 2022).

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[8] We are truly grateful to Astrid Ulloa, Miriam Lang, and Arturo Escobar for personally discussing with us the reasons behind the shift from coloniality to colonialism.

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Climate coloniality

The term "climate coloniality" was coined by Farhana Sultana in her 2022 article, "The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality." She applies the notion of coloniality to explore the complex effects of climate change on the populations and ecosystems of former colonies that are still organized according to colonial structures of power. Sultana (2022) states, "We are still colonized, but this time through climate change, the development industry, and globalization" (p. 2). By highlighting the material politico-economic effects of climate change policies, the concept of climate coloniality resonates strongly with previous contributions on green colonialism, as Sultana (2022) recognizes herself: "Interventions are called by various names and have different tenors – green colonialism, carbon colonialism, fossil capitalism – but often with similar outcomes of domination, displacement, degradation, and impoverishment" (p. 5). In fact, throughout her article, Sultana explores the unequal material effects of climate change and the underlying capitalist system on racialized and gendered populations of the Global South.

The concept of climate coloniality goes beyond material and economic processes. It is also mobilized by Sultana (2022) to point to the epistemological dimensions of climate discourse and action, as well as to make visible the knowledge and voices of grassroots activists from the Global South, who contest the homogenization of climate responsibility and the uneven distribution of climate risks. Climate coloniality is therefore introduced as a tool to explore the material, discursive, and epistemic dimensions of climate change in ways that resonate with previous contributions of the coloniality of nature and green colonialism scholarship.

Mediating the material and epistemological discussion on climate coloniality, Sultana gives a central place to embodied and lived experiences of climate change. Her conceptualization of climate coloniality opens with a personal reflection that she developed during a massive tropical cyclone in Bangladesh. The article continues by inviting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color scholars to express their own embodied experiences of the current environmental crisis. In resonance with the decolonial tradition of *senti-pensar* (feeling-thinking), Sultana (2022) valorizes the knowledge that results from the lived experiences of coloniality, challenging the sacralization of *objective* knowledge production that erases other ways of knowing and being in the world.

To carry out this work, Sultana (2022) relies, sometimes more explicitly than others, on the established notions of the coloniality of power, knowledge, being, and nature. For example, to highlight the racial dimension of social hierarchies described by the notion of the coloniality of power, Sultana (2022) argues that "ongoing climate coloniality is expressed through insidious racism globally and continued Othering" (p. 4). This process gives place to a climate apartheid in which some populations are made expendable or are given the responsibility to pay the disproportionate price of climate breakdown (p. 5).

Moving to the epistemological dimensions of coloniality, Sultana points to the Western hegemonization of climate narratives, financing, and solutions. She argues that "coloniality discursively limits the terms of global debate, hegemonizes knowledge of and about climate change, and what actions are possible, thereby destroying other epistemologies" (p. 6). Based on the work of Bhambra (2017), she states that "methodological whiteness" is "normalized in education, training, policy-making, and public discourse on climate" and that the "[u]ncritical adoption and internationalization of colonial gaze of assumptive Western superiority and techno-fetishism are ever-present" (Sultana, 2022, p. 6). This point leads us to the coloniality of being. Sultana (2022) expresses that "colonized Others are made to feel and think as being epistemologically and ontologically deficient" (p. 6).

In sum, Sultana's conceptualization of climate coloniality successfully combines the contributions of green colonialism and coloniality to shed light on the complex processes raised by climate change. There is less on the analysis of the rift between natures and cultures and other contributions made by the coloniality of nature framework and decolonial political ontology (e.g. Blaser, 2010; De la Cadena, 2015). Combining Sultana's concept of climate coloniality with decolonial thought and political ecology from Latin America and the Caribbean provides us with appropriate conceptual tools to unravel and challenge the ongoing colonialities of climate change and action, as well as to reflect on the persistence and intensification of power relations and interdependencies between the Global North and South. An important aspect in this regard, which is particularly emphasized by feminist political ecology from Latin America, is the notion of emancipation and

the relevance of place-based struggles. Both of these point to the need not only to resist but also to overcome the modern/colonial world system with the aim of developing viable alternatives and counter-strategies from the bottom up that emphasize reproductive practices, ecological justice, and the intrinsic value of more-than-humans.

With these introductory considerations, we do not claim to develop an exhaustive analysis or a new conceptual framework; rather, we attempt to show the conceptual connections and exchanges between the notions of the coloniality of nature, green colonialism, and climate coloniality, as well as some of their differences and blind spots. Taking up activist voices, decolonial thought, and feminist perspectives, we also aim to open up a discursive space for emancipatory and anti-patriarchal thought and action. This exercise, we believe, is of great importance to advance a critical agenda that recognizes the work of often marginalized and peripheral scholars/activists, striving for a culture of cross-dialogue and epistemic symmetry. Resonating with this approach, the articles we present in the special section reflect the plurality and interconnectedness of theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and activist traditions on several continents. Many of them dive deeper than we have in some of the themes covered here, while others introduce new cases that challenge our understanding of these phenomena. Beyond these contributions, we believe that further work is needed in order to pluralize our understanding of the colonialities of climate change and action, taking into consideration different intellectual strands of postcolonial thought, subaltern studies and even those that engage critically with decolonization (Táíwò 2022).

3. Contributions in this special section

The contributions to this special section come from different parts of the world, including cases from Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, South Africa and India, as well as conceptual reflections that have global implications. These contributions deal with different aspects of the colonialities of climate change and action including the narrative, epistemic and practical aspects of energy transitions, financial tools related to water infrastructure projects, community-led alternatives for energy production, ontological pluralism and grassroots resistance to extractivism, and the current difficulties of imagining political alternatives in times of climate catastrophe. Taken together, these contributions illustrate the plurality of climate coloniality, shedding light over the mental, epistemic, intersectional and material ways in which it operates today.

Harold Bellanger's article, "Climate services for food security in Guatemala," elaborates on the colonial underpinnings and embedded injustices of climate services that aim to provide climate projections in the agricultural sector. Bellanger (2024) shows how climate services, a top-down policy instrument communicated through agroclimatic bulletins, neglect colonial and neoliberal dynamics. Focusing on international and Guatemalan institutions and advocates of climate service and applying the lens of climate coloniality, Bellanger shows that despite efforts at inclusion, popularization, and co-production of knowledge, the technical discussion of food security displaces deep issues, such as unequal access to land and water or institutional racism, thus reproducing the empty promises of modernity and progress.

Similarly, and also in the field of environmental governance, Hector Herrera's article, "Embedding Municipal Green Bonds in Mexico City's hydrosocial cycle," (2024) uses the analytical lenses of climate coloniality and climate justice, as well as urban political ecology's methodological approach, to critically examine the effects of municipal green bonds as a so-called successful green intervention for climate action. Using the example of two water infrastructures in Mexico City, Herrera argues that municipal green bonds have led to an entanglement of green debt and water circulation while masking climate injustices and colonial legacies that are already prevalent in local water circulation infrastructure, with socioeconomic and gendered implications.

In "Provincializing energy transition," Larry Lohmann (2024) focuses on one of the main narratives describing international responses to climate change—energy transition. Lohmann's main argument is that the idea of energy transition in its current hegemonic form is inherently colonialist, so social movements must acknowledge these colonial roots to build new alliances and strategies in the face of the climate crisis. Lohmann's main point, however, is not to dismiss the notion of the energy transition but rather communally help (re)write into its history its ambivalences, contradictions, and inherent power hierarchies and to make

visible what has been made invisible. This is precisely what he—borrowing Dipesh Chakrabarty's terminology—means with the idea of "provincializing energy transition" (p. 665) as a slow, respectful translation and continual, collaborative re-translation back and forth among communities with radically varying understandings of energy and time.

Alex Lenferna provides an example of the narrative dimensions of energy transitions for the case of South Africa. In his article "Oil and gas corporations as anti-racist decolonial liberators? A case study of propaganda from the struggle against Shell in South Africa," Lenferna (2024) unpacks the propaganda mobilized by the supporters of oil companies, such as Shell, that seek to expand their extractive activities in the country. Lenferna confronts narratives that justify gas extraction as a necessary step to support the renewable energy transition locally. Moreover, he challenges Shell supporters who mobilize anti-imperialist, decolonial and racial justice narratives to criticize environmental resistance to extractive projects and to push forward fossil fuel interest in South Africa.

In the article "Pathways to decolonize North–South relations around energy transition," Miriam Lang (2024) also focuses on the colonial nature of energy transitions, pointing to the extraction of strategic minerals needed for energy transitions and green growth for the world's major powers. The contribution examines three community renewable energy projects in the Intag Valley, Ecuador, in the context of peasant resistance to the constant threat of large-scale mining amid shifting Ecuadorian politics and global energy markets. By analyzing the multiscalar dynamics and the political, economic, sociocultural, and environmental forces and actors that shaped these territorial conflicts, Lang seeks to contribute to the debates on the geopolitics of ecosocial transitions from the perspective of Latin American political ecology.

A different view on energy can be found in "Energy colonialism" by Franziska Müller (2024). This article illustrates how the concept of energy colonialism offers new analytical perspectives to understand, critique, and connect apparently unrelated phenomena, such as green financialization or land conflicts, due to renewable energy infrastructure. Müller's contribution elaborates the concept's history, identifies its weaknesses, and—building on Anibal Quijano's threefold concept of coloniality—determines analytical strategies to develop a nuanced understanding of energy colonialism. Finally, the author develops a matrix demonstrating how energy colonialism manifests itself at different levels of energy transitions and how the concept may serve as a multidimensional framework for critical social science research on energy transitions, modes of energy governance, energy infrastructures, and energy subjectivities.

Moving away from the field of energy, in "Indigenous onto-epistemology and Niyamgiri Movement in India," Virendra Kumar (2024) problematizes the modern/colonial ontological dualism underpinning environmental crises and advocated the Indigenous/Adivasi relational onto-epistemology as an alternative reality. This understanding, as Kumar shows, questions the virtues of science, capitalism, and colonial narratives and their continuation in the subjectivity and social relations of the modern state. Drawing on insights from New Materialism and the framework of political ontology, Kumar's study further analyzes the political success of the Dongaria Kondh people in defending their relational ways of refuting state- and development-driven extractivism. Kumar also argues that within political struggles, we need an engagement between different realities and knowledge, as well as the recognition of a pluriverse—a world of multiple ways of being, with space for mutual engagement and dialogue between different ontologies (Escobar, 2007).

In the article "Losing touch with Mother Seed", Sunil D. Santha, Devisha Sasidevan, Sowmya Balasubramaniam, Afla C. P., Anna K. J. Steffy, Dhanya Kolathur, Ghurshida Jabeen, and Atul Raman (2024) showcase the nature of climate colonialism by examining the transition of heirloom seed conservation practices in the context of climate change. Based on an action research project involving heirloom seed keepers and small-scale farmers in Tamil Nadu, India, they demonstrate that local knowledge systems and indigenous seed conservation practices are important for strengthening the resilience of small-scale farmers with regard to climate variability and extreme weather. Nevertheless, the modernization and commercialization of agriculture since the colonial and post-independence periods have displaced such practices, paving the way for the mass consumption of hybrid seed varieties and chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The authors argue that the advent of climate change has added another layer of cheapening of nature, resulting in climate change adaptation as a new commodity frontier dispossessing and alienating small-scale farmers.

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In "Decolonizing Refugeehood," Francesca Rosignoli (2024) argues that the misrecognition of climate refugees in international law is an expression of climate coloniality, as it is linked to the imposition of Western categories of power, knowledge, and hierarchy of subjectivities. Building on this argument, Rosignoli applies the tripartite notion of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being and proposes a decolonial environmental justice approach, which can help overcome the colonial impasse preventing the acknowledgment of the notion of a climate refugee in international law. The article concludes by emphasizing the role of non-state actors and the need to overcome state-based approaches in order to apply the concept of vulnerability as a lens to identify and recognize climate refugees as environmentally displaced persons who, like political refugees, are deprived of their fundamental human rights.

Finally, in "A colonial lack of imagination," Lukas Stoltz (2024) addresses the difficulty of imagining political alternatives in times of climate catastrophe. Stoltz's main argument is that public debates about climate futures increasingly oscillate between catastrophism and cruel eco-optimism—an imaginative impasse that the article seeks to overcome. Focusing on recent examples of climate change coverage and analyzing new ideological trends, such as *apocalyptic optimism*, Stoltz situates this impasse within the sociological debate on the social imaginaries of climate change. Moreover, drawing on recent decolonial and indigenous proposals, such as *settler apocalypticism* and the *carbon imaginary*, the article argues that the oscillation between doom and denial can be interpreted as a colonial lack of imagination. Conceptually, Stoltz brings sociological diagnoses of time and climate emotions into dialogue with decolonial and indigenous studies, eco-socialist interventions, and early critical theory. Inspired by these insights, particularly by the thought of Günter Anders, the article concludes by asking what a *training of the imagination*, which could overcome an imaginative blindness, could mean today in times of climate catastrophe.

To conclude this introduction, we would like to use the last few lines to thank all the authors once again for their insightful contributions and their engaging, fruitful, and cordial collaboration over the past year and a half. All of their different perspectives, experiences, theoretical elaborations, and empirical insights have contributed to an urgently needed critical agenda on the multiple and complex colonialities of climate change and climate action and have helped to make these topics more visible in academic and activist debates.

Acknowledgements

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