



What Goes Around Comes Around: From The Coloniality of Power to the Crisis of Civilization¹

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Abstract

This article combines world-systems, decolonial, eco-feminist and post-human ecological approaches to deconstruct the planetary crisis of the hegemonic civilization. Underpinned by anthropocentric, androcentric, hetero-patriarchal, Euro/Western-centric, modern/colonial and capitalist systems of power, this civilization causes devastating socioecological effects. Globalized through (neo)colonialism/(neo)imperialism, it has subjugated the rural under the urban and the Global South under the North, becoming globally hegemonic. Through the coloniality of power hegemonic conceptions of progress, growth, development and modernity have been spread, procuring the loyalty of semi-peripheral and peripheral regimes into a civilizational obsession with endless accumulation based on the “mastery of nature.” Most “postcolonial” elites, especially across “emerging economies,” have not broken with this coloniality. They often reproduce govern-mentalities aimed at “catching-up” with, cloning, emulating, imitating or conforming to hegemonic models enacted in the North’s metropolitan cores. Overcoming this crisis requires not only a critique of neoliberal capitalist modernity, but a world-systemic transformation towards ecosufficient lifeways based on indigenous, eco-feminist, and post-human alternatives.

Keywords: World-System, Hegemony, Civilization, Crisis, Coloniality, Transition

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[T]he imperial mode of living...refers to dominant patterns of production, distribution, and consumption...[among] upper and middle classes of the global North and increasingly in the emerging countries of the global South....The imperial mode of living is...based on an unlimited appropriation of resources and labor power and...a disproportionate claim to global sinks. In the constellation of the 'multiple crises', it...[helps preserve] stability in the...North and provides a hegemonic orientation...[for] the...South...[I]n some countries, such as China, Brazil, and India, we have seen the emergence of large upper and middle classes—'new consumers'...oriented toward 'Western' modes of living. (In...Latin America, this... emerged during the Fordist period.) A central dynamic in countries with so-called emerging economies, particularly India and China, is that the fossilist pattern of consumption and production of the global North is spreading. This tends to generalize [an imperial] mode of living that, from an ecological perspective, cannot be generalized... —Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen

We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must cover this distance in ten years. Either we'll succeed or we'll go under. —Josef Stalin

...how is it that we do not understand that we have better things to do than to follow the same Europe? ...today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for ...their triumphs...[T]he European game has...ended; we must find something different. We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe [or Western civilization]. So...let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it. Humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and...obscene emulation. —Franz Fanon

An Autophagous Civilization

Today we face a planetary crisis. Environmental, energy, food, financial, and social reproduction crises are disrupting the world-system (Ahmed 2010; McMichael 2011; Chase-Dunn 2013; Houtart 2010; Kallis, Martinez-Alier and Norgaard 2009; Foster, Clark, York 2010; Goodman and Salleh 2015; Peterson 2010; Rockstrom et.al. 2009, 2009b; Salleh 2012; Smith 2014; Steffen et.al. 2007). This planetary crisis, we argue, has been triggered by a globalizing mode of civilization that has

become hegemonic.² This mode of civilization is constituted and underpinned by anthropocentric, androcentric, hetero-patriarchal, Euro/Western-centric, modern/colonial and capitalist systems of power. Building on world-systems, decolonial, eco-feminist and posthuman theories, we contend that the “coloniality of power” (Quijano 1991; Grosfoguel 2009; Mignolo 2008; Lugones 2007; Maese-Cohen 2010; Dastile and Ndlovu-Gastheni 2013) has worked to globalize a civilization that exhausts the planet and exploits most of its people, thus unleashing a socioecological blowback that is turning this civilization into its own worst enemy.

By “coloniality” we refer to the complex and multidimensional legacy of divisive, exploitative, stratifying and hierarchical *forms of power* (e.g., Eurocentric/Western-centric hegemony), *forms of knowledge* (e.g., technoscientific instrumental rationality), *forms of (inter)subjectivity* (e.g., possessive individualism), *forms of human interrelations* (e.g., racism, classism, heteropatriarchalism, etc.), and *forms of human dominion over land and mastery of “nature”* (e.g., anthropocentric property/dominion/sovereignty) that have become entrenched and continue to be reproduced throughout the world as an ongoing consequence of colonization. Coloniality thus entails that the hegemony of colonial forms persists to this day as a legacy that structurally constitutes modernity, even into supposedly “postcolonial” times. Coloniality is the underside of modernity: the historical and structural foundation that has enabled—e.g., through conquest, imperialism, slavery, resource extraction and Western dominance—the rise, hegemony, and globalization of a world-system dominated by modern civilization.

This civilization has sought to globalize a political-economic model bent on endless accumulation, consumption and growth on a finite planet (Ahmed 2010; Foster, Clark, York 2010; Goodman and Salleh 2013; McMichael 2011; Steffen et.al. 2007; WPCCC 2010). Now in its “neoliberal” stage, this model reinforces a historically-ongoing coloniality of power premised on linear discourses of “progress,” “modernization,” “development,” and “evolution,” altogether

² We understand a “*mode of civilization*” to be any large-scale form of human organization based on specific arrangements of relations among humans and with non-human nature which, in turn, underpin a complex ensemble of bioenvironmental, economic, political, social, cultural and psycho-ideological structures and dynamics engendering relatively stable patterns of practices and institutional apparatuses. There can thus be diverse modes of civilization, e.g., hegemonic vs. subaltern modes. Here we address the mode which, we argue, has become globally hegemonic; we elaborate a theory of the “infrastructures of power” which—we contend—underpin the mode of civilization now globally hegemonic. Our approach draws from literatures across disciplines addressing the “convergent crises of civilization” and the search for alternative, just and sustainable lifeways (e.g., Adelman 2015; Ahmed 2010; Houtart 2010; Huanacuni 2010; Foster, Clark and York 2010; Harawira 2012; Kallis, Martinez-Alier and Norgaard 2009; Grosfoguel 2009; Gonzalez 2015; Apffel-Marglin 2011; Bond 2014; Brand and Wissen 2012; Cudworth and Hobden 2011; McMichael 2011; Min. Rel. Ext., Bolivia 2009; Peterson 2010; Plumwood 2002; Quijano 1991; Raworth 2012; Rockström et.al. 2009; Salleh 2009, 2010, 2012; Steffen, et.al.; 2007; WPCCC 2010b).

constituting a hegemonic “standard of civilization.” Globalized through (neo)colonialism and (neo)imperialism, this “standard of civilization” has subjugated the global South under the North, and the rural under the urban, thereby stratifying the world into multiple overlapping hierarchies structured along core-periphery asymmetries. The globalization of this mode of civilization wouldn’t be possible without the coloniality of power which has assimilated semi-peripheral and peripheral elites into a Western-centric civilizational obsession with endless accumulation based on the “mastery of nature” (Plumwood 2002; Adelman 2015) and geared towards the aggressive pursuit of “high modernism”³ (Scott 1998)—and its “late modern(ist)” continuation. While settler-colonial elites have been instrumental to the expansion of hegemonic civilization, the colonial de-indigenization and cultural assimilation of Southern elites through centuries of Western domination has increasingly entrenched dominant worldviews and practices throughout the globe.

Gonzalez notes; “[i]n the post-colonial period, Southern elites, deeply influenced by Eurocentric ideologies, subjugated their own indigenous and minority populations in order to “modernize” and “develop” them” (2015: 13). Most “postcolonial” elites haven’t broken with this coloniality of power (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gastheni 2013); instead, they often reproduce governmentalities aimed at “catching-up” with, emulating, imitating, “cloning” or conforming to hegemonic models enacted in the North’s metropolitan cores (Sheppard et.al. 2009; McMichael 2011; Grosfoguel 2009; Mignolo 2008). In seeking to emulate the North’s unsustainable “imperial mode of living” (Brand and Wissen 2012), many Southern elites have replicated the North’s “eco-destructive, consumerist-centric, over-financialized, [and] climate-frying maldevelopment model” (Bond 2012).

This coloniality of power has often consumed the creativity, energy, and “resources” of (semi)peripheries in aspirational attempts to emulate and/or conform to hegemonic models by, for example, aggressively pursuing accelerated modernization, developmentalism, urbanization, industrialization, and massified commodity/consumerist cultures at almost any cost, human or ecological. Playing catch-up with the North inevitably requires the present-day rehearsal, in accelerated, compressed manner, of structurally violent practices that have underpinned the North’s “rise” to planetary dominance—like the transformation of nature (including humans) into exploitable “resources” (Apffel-Marglin 2011) and the systematic reliance on coercive statecraft, ecological imperialism, and (neo)colonialism. Comparable practices, now rehearsed in “updated” forms by

³ Scott (1998) describes high modernism as “a strong, even...muscle bound...version of the beliefs in scientific and technical progress...associated with industrialization in Western Europe and North America...At its center [lies] a supreme self-confidence about continued linear progress, the development of scientific and technical knowledge, the expansion of production, the rational design of social order, the growing satisfaction of human needs, and...an increasing control and mastery over nature (including human nature) commensurate with scientific understandings of “natural laws.” High modernism is a...sweeping vision of how...technical and scientific progress might be applied...in every field of human activity...” (89-90).

elites/regimes of semi-peripheral “emerging economies,” seek to replicate expansive core-like metropolitan centers of accumulation, consumption, and growth, like the grossly unequal BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) megalopolises. To achieve this, emerging economies must resort to internal colonialism and “subimperialism” or “second degree imperialism” (Bond 2014) so as to compel into subservience their “own” peripheries as sources of exploitable natural and human “resources.”

Yet in striving to emulate a patently unsustainable Northern “way of life” built on centuries of dispossession, emerging economies face two obstacles: *First*, the **hegemonic barriers** imposed by the dominant regime of accumulation controlled by the North which resists any challenges to its hegemony. *Second*, the **planetary boundaries** (Rockström et.al. 2009) imposed by the Earth’s finite carrying capacity which is already responding to breaches with destabilizing consequences (Foster, Clark, York 2010).

Seduced by the coloniality of power, large “emerging economies”—like BRICS—are on a crash course against entrenched “old” Northern cores—as the latter try to preserve their unsustainable privileges at any cost. Brand and Wissen (2012) note:

[G]eopolitical and geo-economic shifts will...increasingly be...ecological conflicts...[Facing] increasing competition for the earth’s resources and sinks, national and supranational state apparatuses seem...willing to support ‘their’ respective capitals...to strengthen their competitive position and...secure the resource base of their...economies...Thus, the hegemony of the imperial mode of living..., [spreading from]...the global North...to the South...explains...an imperialist rearticulation...in the context of multiple crises (555).

Increasingly volatile tensions are resulting from the clash between the hegemonic system of accumulation and the planetary boundaries. Geopolitical/geoeconomic conflicts, and grabs and scrambles over “resources” strategic for “development(alism),” are proliferating globally.

Such complications can often be traced to the hegemonization of an ecologically unsustainable, socially stratifying and politically volatile model of civilization bent on endless accumulation, consumption and growth on a finite planet. Ironically, the very success in globalizing this civilizational model through the coloniality of power may lead to its autophagous self-destruction through a planetary crisis.

Overcoming this crisis requires not only a critique of modernity in its neoliberal capitalist guise, but a transformation beyond the systems of power underpinning the hegemonic civilization. In

solidarity with movements for systemic change and drawing on decolonial dialogues we conclude with a blueprint for a just and sustainable transition inspired on indigenous, eco-feminist, and posthuman alternatives.

Planetary Crisis

Five converging crises are triggering a *planetary crisis of civilization*:

Ecological Rift. Modern civilization is causing an ecological rift with global biospheric lifecycles, breaching planetary boundaries and overshooting the Earth's carrying capacity by exhausting and disrupting nature's metabolic labor (Foster, Clark, York 2010; Ahmed 2010; Rockström, Steffen, Noone et.al. 2009; Salleh 2010). We are breaching four of nine planetary boundaries;⁴ further breaching seems inevitable as we continue to rely on this civilizational model. This anthropogenic eco-crisis is undermining the natural bases for human existence. The ecological rift derives from the anthropocentrism of the hegemonic civilization, aggravated by modernist drives for mastery of nature and capital accumulation, resulting in gross overconsumption of planetary biocapacity: "humanity...uses the equivalent of 1.5 planets to provide the resources we use and absorb our waste... [I]t now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year" (World Footprint 2014). Most ecological degradation comes from overconsumption and waste driven by the lifestyle of metropolitan centers globally, and of "(over)developed" rich countries. McMichael (2011) notes: the richest countries have generated 42% of global environmental degradation while paying only 3% of resulting costs. Urban areas occupy around 2% of global land yet produce more than two thirds of CO₂ emissions. If everybody in the world lived like the average US or Canadian resident, we would need between three and five Earths—if not more—to regenerate humanity's annual demand on nature; if everybody lived like the average EU resident, we would need 2.5 to 3.5 Earths. Emergent economies seeking to rapidly catch up and emulate Northern lifestyles—like the BRICS—dramatically aggravate this. This "imperial mode of living" propagated from cores and now also semi-cores is socio-ecologically unsustainable and dangerous (Brand and Wissen 2012).

Energy/Resource Depletion. Overconsumption is causing a crisis of energy scarcity and natural resource depletion of oil, natural gas, coal, uranium, essential minerals, and water (Ahmed 2010; Zittel et.al. 2013; Sheppard 2009; Evans 2010; "Water Facts and Figures" 2014). Peak-oil may have already occurred in 2005-2008 (Ahmed 2010); the Energy Working Group estimated

⁴According to the Stockholm Resilience Centre: (1) climate change; (2) change in biosphere integrity; (3) biogeochemical flows (4) land-system change. The remaining boundaries at risk are (5) stratospheric ozone depletion; (6) ocean acidification (7) freshwater use; (8) atmospheric aerosol loading; (9) introduction of novel entities (<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/1-15-2015-planetary-boundaries-2.0---new-and-improved.html>).

overall conventional energy peak for 2015 (Zittel et.al. 2013). Mineral depletion is predicted to exhaust 26 of the 37 most important minerals by 2100 (Sheppard 2009). By 2025 the number of people living in absolute water scarcity is projected to rise 50%, with “two thirds of the world’s population...in water-stressed conditions” (Evans 2010).

Food System Crisis: Between 2001-2008 global demand exceeded supply and the global stockpile of grain shrank by half (Cribb 2010). “[A]verage productivity growth rates [2.0% 1970-1990]...fell to 1.1% between 1990 and 2007 and are projected to continue to decline” (Evans 2010:3). Modern industrial agriculture and the consumption/waste patterns of global North and metropolitan lifestyles are exhausting soils and sinks globally. Industrial agriculture through land-use change, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides is eroding soils, creating topsoil loss, and exhausting nature’s “metabolic labor” (Salleh 2010; McMichael 2011). Agro-industrial methods like monocropping and industrial economies of scale destroy biodiversity and carbon sinks, and degrade nutritional quality (Altieri 2009). Industrial aquaculture has fully exploited or overexploited most of the world’s fish stocks. The food system’s increasingly corporate consolidation multiplies social-environmental externalities through overexploitation of natural and human resources and gross maldistribution. The “globalized” methane-releasing “meatified” modern food system requires unnecessarily long transportation and is heavily dependent on dwindling fossil fuels, making it a major greenhouse gas emitter. All this is triggering a global food system crisis, profoundly impacting semi/peripheral regions (Ahmed 2010; McMichael 2011; Cribb 2010; Evans 2010.). However, further growth isn’t the answer. We already produce excess food—albeit of disappointing nutritional quality, yet much is wasted and distribution is so skewed that “providing the additional calories needed by the 13% of the world’s population facing hunger would require just 1% of the current global food supply” (Raworth 2012: 5). By shifting to agroecology, indigenous/small peasant methods, and permaculture, coupled with equitable, redistributive, communal and local economies we can produce more nutritious food, ensure fairer distribution, reduce waste, regenerate biodiversity, and fight climate change (Altieri 2009).

Economic/Financial Crisis. The 2008 global economic/financial downturn resulted from contingent, recent-historical, and structural factors. While contingent factors like the housing market collapse and recent-historical factors like neoliberal deregulation of financial markets are crucial, we underline the long-term structural problems. Most importantly the growing disconnection between (a.) an increasingly financialized global economy, (b.) the “real” economy of human production, and (c.) the “real-real” economy of socio-ecological reproduction based on the Earth’s biocapacity to provide “ecological services” (Kallis, Martinez-Alier and Norgaard 2009). The increasingly financialized capitalist economy is grossly abstracted from the real economy of production based on human labor, and from the real-real economy of reproduction based on the socio-ecologically metabolic labor of communities and the planet. The second

structural problem is the exploding global inequality coupled with persistent poverty; this notwithstanding the continuous (albeit slowing) growth of the global economy. Again, the issue isn't that we need more growth, but that we have an increasing concentration of wealth tied to gross maldistribution and rampant waste (according to Credit Suisse, the top 8% of the world's population concentrates almost 80% of global wealth). The global economic system is based on a faulty notion of endless accumulation propelled by increasingly financialized debt disconnected from its growing social and ecological debt (Ahmed 2010; Foster, Clark, York 2010; Peterson 2010; Kallis, Martinez-Alier and Norgaard 2009; Salleh 2010).

Social Reproduction Crisis. This crisis results from the accelerated exploitation of productive and reproductive labor, leading to massive demographic displacements—so-called “migrations”—from rural to urban, and from peripheries to cores. Overconsumption in cores and now also semi-cores requires constantly increasing absorption of people—especially from semi-peripheries and peripheries—into a global system of production geared towards endless growth. For example, people displaced from their local land bases by the globalization and intensification of corporate and/or state mega-projects, industrial monocrops and resource extraction are often absorbed as cheap migrant labor moving towards the exploding slum-settlements of chaotically growing urbanized centers in emerging Southern economies or towards already established Northern centers of accumulation. There, they are incorporated as easily exploitable, often undocumented labor, crossing dangerous, sometimes lethal, and increasingly militarized Northern borders (e.g., the US-Mexico border, the EU's Mediterranean) (Robinson and Santos 2014). Demographic displacements are aggravated by environmental/climate degradation, oppression and conflicts—many rooted in colonial/postcolonial/neocolonial histories and hegemonic/imperialist wars. Rural to urban and South to North displacements drain the human, cultural, and social-reproductive capabilities of traditional/rural/peasant/agricultural/fishing communities and Southern regions generally (Gasper and Truong 2014). The social reproduction crisis is gendered and racialized, primarily affecting women, peasants, indigenous communities, and people of color (Salleh 2010; Peterson 2010; McMichael 2011).

The critical consequences are threefold: the brain drain, the proliferation of migrant/refugee labor, and the care drain. Racialized rural, peasant, indigenous and traditional communities are eroded by the massive transference or displacement of productive, reproductive, and intellectual labor to cities and to the North. Working-age people are being absorbed, often in violent, exploitative and oppressive conditions, into hyper-productive globalized economies of capital accumulation. Concomitantly, many children, elderly, and disabled are marginalized, left uncared for as socially-reproductive labor erodes. The care drain feeds the new genderization and feminization of labor in manufacturing, especially light assembly (e.g., maquiladoras, export-processing zones, sweatshops). Labor feminization draws from migrant female workers coming

from rural communities. Communities of origin, deprived of working age females (and males), lose the reproductive labor needed to care for social needs like education, safety, health, child and elderly care, often becoming reliant on migrant remittances. The care drain also feeds the South to North export of female labor to cover for the scarcity of reproductive labor resulting from the absorption of Northern female labor into the “productive” labor force. Moreover, the growing global sex trade absorbs and exploits economically-marginalized women, especially from semi/peripheries. Add gendered—and racialized—labor exploitation in less visible realms like domestic work, care work, and agroindustry. The social reproduction crisis also embeds a health crisis stemming from acute inequality, environmental degradation, neoliberal erosion of public health infrastructures, and deteriorated access to food, water and resources. This health crisis, on the one hand creates the growth of noncommunicable “diseases of globalization” resulting from consumerist, commodity-based, sedentary and industrial lifestyles (e.g., diabetes, coronary heart disease, obesity, hypertension, depression, etc.), while on the other hand it perpetuates in the “Third World” communicable diseases such as malaria and cholera, among many others. This health crisis interacts with other abovementioned crises to further complicate social reproduction and to trigger displacement (Harris and Seid 2004; Schreker 2012; McMichael, Barnett and McMichael 2012; Ottersen, Dasgupta, Blouin et.al. 2014; The Global Health Watch 2014).

These crises are *partly* triggered and aggravated by neoliberalism, including its dismantling of social support networks and ecological protections globally since the 1980s, which set the stage for the globalization of corporate and financial capital at the expense of people and planet. Yet the roots of the planetary crisis are deeper.

The planetary crisis, we contend, has resulted from the generalization of a hegemonic mode of civilization underpinned by the layered intersection of anthropocentric, androcentric, heterosexist, rationalist, Euro/Western-centric, modern/colonial, racialized, industrialist/developmentalist, capitalist, and ableist systems of power. These ten systems of power constitute the *infrastructures of hegemonic civilization*. Upon them, complex discursive and institutional apparatuses have been built and reproduced, asymmetrically shaping relations, practices, and cultures, often in structurally hierarchical, violent, oppressive, and exploitative ways. Such infrastructures buttress vitiated relations among humans and with non-humans, thereby producing, reproducing and accelerating the crises. These infrastructures must be critically and materially deconstructed to enable alternative worldviews, lifeways, organizational forms and practices to flourish. Drawing on decolonial, ecofeminist, posthumanist-ecological, and world-systems analysis we describe these infrastructures and how they feedback on each other:⁵

⁵ Diagram 1, illustrated later in the paper, also details this feedback.

- *Anthropocentrism* entails power relations that separate and privilege “human” life-forms vis-à-vis the rest of nature. Anthropocentrism undergirds some of the central worldviews constituting the hegemonic order: Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), humanism, modern Western science, capitalism, the Westphalian state-system as based on the principle of non-human nature as “territory” subject to anthropocentric sovereign dominion, etc. Anthropocentrism underpins an order where “Man” entitles himself with the right and power to hold and exercise dominion, sovereignty, property, territoriality and ownership over the rest of “nature.” “Nature” becomes accessory, instrument, and resource to an abstracted “Man” alienated from the lifeworld (e.g., Harawira 2012; Cudworth and Hobden 2011).
- *Androcentrism* entails power relations that privilege human life-forms manifesting *male* attributes and *masculine* behaviors over non-male and non-masculine attributes/behaviors. *Patriarchalism* undergirds social orderings that privilege male/masculine forms, attributes, values, and dispositions. *Hegemonic masculinity* privileges *dominant* males and/or *domineering* masculinities (e.g., militarist, businessman). Androcentric, hegemonic-masculine, and patriarchal premises interact with anthropocentric and other premises (below) to buttress various worldviews underpinning the hegemonic order (e.g., Abrahamic traditions, colonialism, modern Western science, capitalism, the states-system, etc.) (e.g., Plumwood 2002; Salleh 2010; Peterson 2010).
- *Heterosexism* privileges social-reproductive regimes based on dyadically-gendered (masculine/feminine) and/or biologically-dimorphic (male/female) relations. *Heteropatriarchalism* normalizes social-reproductive regimes that rely on dyadic, heterosexually-constituted relations where male/masculine poles dominate feminine/female poles. These power relations have underpinned multiple, now hegemonic, worldviews (e.g., Abrahamic traditions), driving modernity, modern science, colonialism/imperialism, capitalism and the states-system (Lugones 2007; Connell 2000).
- *Rationalism* privileges the faculty of “reason” (*logos* or *ratio*) as the principal means through which humans should relate to each other and to the lifeworld, and according to which humans should order their relations with themselves, each other and the rest of nature. Rationalism presumes a world operating according to an intelligibly coherent, predominantly linear and “universal” order of logic, language and/or law of which human “reason” is a mirror; and/or assumes that humans ought to structure the world through the projection of “reason” to order life, nature and “reality.” Rationalism often assumes a subject/object hierarchical binary where the “rational” and active subject (e.g., human, male, European/white) acts upon the “irrational”

and passive/receiving object (e.g., non-human, non-male, non-European/non-white). It often also assumes an objectivism, positing a “reality” outside the “subject,” and a mind/body, intellect/matter division. Rationalism presumes the possibility to compartmentalize, separate or *analyze* the world for the purposes rationalizing, objectifying, mastering and instrumentalizing “it,” or synthesizing “it” in the service of human interests. Rationalism seeks to demystify and desacralize the world, rendering it amenable to mastery, power, control and manipulation. Rationalism privileges “reason” *over* pathos, passion, emotion, spirit/spirituality, sensation, relationality, intuition, empathy, compassion, instinct, animality, etc.—and deems “inferior” and/or marginalizes life-forms/lifeways (whether human or non-human) associated with the latter attributes (e.g., views privileging and separating “rational” men from “emotional” women, “rational” Europeans-whites from “savage/barbaric” non-Europeans, “rational Man” from “instinctual” animals and “wild” nature, “rational, self-governing” upper classes from “ungovernable” lower classes driven by bodily passions, etc.). Rationalism underpins modernity, modern science, capitalism, industrialism, the state, anthropocentrism, colonialism, Eurocentrism, racism, and other hegemonic systems (e.g., Apffel-Marglin 2011; Quijano 1991; Adelman 2015).

- *Euro/Western-centrism* entails a “civilizational chauvinism” privileging European cultures and their inheritors (e.g., settler states) as bearers of “reason,” “superior culture,” “civilization,” “modernity,” “ethnoracial supremacy,” etc. Euro/Western-centrism undergirds the modern/colonial and racialized world ordering, in turn shaping a global class structure and division of labor privileging the West over the rest, placing the Western and Westernized at the core of the world-capitalist system, setting the “standard of civilization” and “development” for “uncivilized/undeveloped/developing others” (e.g., Gruffyd-Jones, et.al. 2006).
- *Modernity/Coloniality* is the power-matrix enabling the emergence and consolidation of the modern world, its “epistemologies of mastery” (Adelman 2015), notably its “mastery of nature” through modern science, technology, industry, urban civilization, and development(alism). These have been built on an intersection of oppressive systems like the imperial/colonial world ordering under Euro/Western-centric domination and hegemony, leading to the subjugation, extermination, enslavement, destruction, deconstruction and/or marginalization of the non-Western, non-white and non-urban. This power matrix underpins a historically-ongoing racialized, classist, and sexist world-ordering with hierarchically-differentiated divisions of power and labor (Quijano 1991; Grosfoguel 2009).
- *Race and racism* derive from, and help constitute Euro/Western-centrism and the

modern/colonial power matrix wherein discourses construing humans as hierarchically separated by phenotypical and ethno/culturally essentialized attributes are circulated globally, and sedimented locally, through disciplinary powers and normalized governmentalities of rule; this has entrenched hierarchically racialized systems of power/oppression privileging a socio-politically constructed, and materially/economically entrenched ordering where Euro-Western and white supremacy rests on the subjugation of “non-white/Southern other(s)” (Gruffyd Jones 2008).

- *Industrialism and developmentalism* operate together, structuring complex socioeconomic and political-economic apparatuses through which “modernization,” built upon discourses of mastery of nature and metanarratives of linear growth and progress, is attained. This through reliance on hierarchical, mechanized, specialized and bureaucratizing/corporate modes of social division of labor, production, and distribution. Their purpose is to harness energy/labor from human *and* non-human sources so as to extract and process “resources” into the creation of mass socioeconomic infrastructures meant for the enhancement of commodious lifestyles (especially for globally-privileged classes/groups) and the production, distribution and consumption of ever increasing amounts of commodities (e.g., McMichael 2010; Salleh 2010, 2012).
- *Capitalism* is a system based on private property/ownership of means of production held by a class seeking to capitalize on the commodification and extraction of surplus value from labor and nature. Capitalism produces ever more numerous commodities for exchange in a market with the intent of obtaining profits. These profits are reinvested in further production for exchange in a perennial drive to accumulate capital. Capital accumulation and the systematic pursuit of profit builds on, reproduces and aggravates the “two contradictions of capital:” That in the drive for profit and capital accumulation, both human labor and nature’s labor must be increasingly subjected to the extraction of surplus value (e.g., through disciplinary “enhancements of productivity and efficiency”). In turn this leads to the exploitation and exhaustion of the two main sources of value and wealth: humans and Mother Earth/“nature.” The first contradiction is that capital accumulation requires, yet undermines the human source of value (i.e., “labor/human resources”); the second contradiction is that capitalism requires, yet undermines the “natural” source of value (i.e., “natural resources” like biodiversity, the atmosphere, and the Earth’s crust). Hence, capitalism is a major driver of the ecological rift (Foster et.al. 2010; Ahmed 2010).
- *Ableism* privileges bodies considered within hegemonic discourses to manifest faculties, attributes and behaviors enabling them to “fully operate” within expectations set by the above-

described power relations. Thus, faculties associated with the “human,” “male,” and “fully-abled,” etc., are privileged (e.g., “rationality” over instinct, intellect/mind over emotion, humanity over animality, culture over nature, youth over old age, ability over “disability,” etc.). Within this intersection of power infrastructures, certain capabilities—and their bodily carriers—are hierarchically privileged over others as a function of interlocking standards like “efficiency” and “productivity” (e.g., capitalism), and of the disciplinary/functional and aesthetic expectations imposed by dominant cultures of power that are anthropocentric, androcentric, heterosexist, rationalist, Eurocentric, racist, etc. (Russel and Maholtra 2002).

These infrastructures, which directly relate to the crises, underpin the dominant structures, discourses, practices and relationships constituting the *hegemonic civilization* (see Diagram 1, below).

Diagram 1. Infrastructures of Hegemonic Civilization & Global Crises



Coloniality of Power: Cloning Hegemony

For decolonial theorist Nelson Maldonado-Torres, coloniality entails “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as result of colonialism” and continue to “define culture, labor, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge-production well beyond the...limits of colonial

administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism” (quoted in Dastile and Ndlovu Gastheni 2013:108-109). This continuation and/or reconfiguration of colonial legacies in multifarious forms of “coloniality” is embodied and reproduced by hegemonic assemblages including structures, practices, discourses, knowledges, institutions, hierarchies, and cultural manifestations. For instance, belief-systems, religions, spiritualities, worldviews and cosmovisions (e.g., Abrahamic worldviews, especially Christian hegemony over indigenous cosmovisions); also languages, ideologies, discourses and structures of social relations (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, linguistic imperialism, etc.); international/global relations and political structures (e.g., Western over non-Western, North over South, center over periphery, rural over urban, states over commons, etc.); socio-ecological modes of organization (e.g., anthropocentric systems) including regimes of land tenure (e.g., “property” over commons, “dominion/sovereignty” over land, “man” over nature), regimes of production (e.g., modern industrial capitalism *and* state socialism over land-based communalism) and regimes of reproduction (e.g., the hetero-monogamous family). Such hegemonic apparatuses build on, reconfigure, reproduce and seek—whether consciously or not—to perpetuate asymmetric and/or exploitative relations born of colonial legacies and reenacted through (neo)colonial relations of power/knowledge and mastery of nature.

Coloniality persists, even when formal colonialism has *supposedly* ended. The so-called “postcolonial” condition (e.g., throughout the “Third World”) embeds a coloniality reproduced and propagated by Westernized elites and intelligentsias through the abovementioned hegemonic assemblages and apparatuses, etc. Ramon Grosfoguel notes:

One...powerful myth...of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a ‘postcolonial’ world. The...structures put in place over...450 years did not evaporate with...juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the...‘colonial power matrix’. With juridical-political decolonization we moved from...‘global colonialism’ to the current period of ‘global coloniality’ (quoted in Dastile and Ndlovu-Gastheni 2013:118).

Not even formal colonialism has ended; many settler-colonial states, elites and powers persist and many people(s) are subject to settler-colonialism and border imperialism—e.g., “Fourth World” indigenous populations, migrants, refugees, etc. (Walia 2013). In any case, like Dastile and Ndlovu-Gastheni underline, often “postcolonial states...remain...operating like colonial states, unleashing violence” on local and indigenous people “who are...often treated like subjects rather than citizens by their leaders. Juridical freedom has not...translated into popular freedom” (118)—let alone

economic emancipation or cultural/civilizational decolonization. Postcolonial elites and intelligentsias are heavily assimilated into the coloniality of the dominant worldview, they often aspire to be(come) like the colonizer and create in their lands a mirror image or clone of the colonizer's society. They “conceive...[their] mission as the dragging of a [‘]technically backward[’], [‘]unschooled[’], subsistence-oriented population” into “modernity” (Scott 1998:96)—often *violently* dragging the “undeveloped”, either through “markets” or the “state” or both. Gonzales (2015) summarizes: “[i]n the post-colonial period, Southern elites, deeply influenced by Eurocentric ideologies, [have] subjugated...indigenous and minority populations...to ‘modernize’ and ‘develop’ them” (13).

To understand how coloniality disseminates the dominant civilizational model we revisit Essed's and Goldberg's (2002) critical analysis of (1) the “cultures of cloning” and (2) the “cloning of cultures.” Here, “cultures of cloning,” entails the colonization of the lifeworld by systems that standardize the production and reproduction of objects (e.g., standardized commodification of life) and subjects (e.g., reproduction of modern and/or neoliberal subjectivities). This, according to hegemonic models, privileges male, masculine, heteronormative, Euro-Western, modernist, productivist, consumerist, bourgeois-capitalist subjectivities. Invoking Walter Benjamin (2008[1936]), we argue that hegemonic modes of production propagate a mechanical/automatized reproduction of commodified objects and subjects modeled on modernist/colonial, industrial, and capitalist economies of scale. Hegemonic apparatuses mechanize/automatize/standardize the replication of entities and subjectivities framed by the (above-described) infrastructures of power. Consider how corporate apparatuses of capital clone entities and commodities employing industrial economies of scale and monocultures, and promoting consumerism through marketing to reproduce standardized “modern” subjectivities. Ideological state apparatuses play a crucial role in reproducing subjectivities modeled on hegemonic infrastructures.

“Cloning of cultures” entails the imposition, exportation, transplantation, copying, emulation, or imitation of hegemonic modes of social (and we add ecological) ordering. Consider how coloniality propagates a desire to transplant and mechanically reproduce or “clone” the worldviews and lifeways of “cores” to “peripheries.” Consider also how “diffusionist” and “catch up” discourses and practices of “civilization” and “development” propagate models of social-ecological ordering that replicate the infrastructures of hegemonic civilization. Colonialism/neocolonialism has been crucial in “spreading” this mono-cultural “standard of civilization” via notions of progress that “globalize” anthropocentric, hegemonic-masculine, modernist, Euro/Western-centric, liberal, capitalist and consumerist models of organization; thus attempts at establishing the hegemonic civilization as the long-term global aspiration of all peoples—especially elites—embody a systematic cloning of cultures propagated through coloniality.

This cloning of hegemonic cultures has ensued without regard to its destruction of *diversity* (both social and biotic—*sociobiodiversity*) and its undermining of resilience. Resilience rests on diversity as a source of alternative lifeforms and lifeways so that the potential failure of one mode of social-ecological ordering need not bring a universal “planetary collapse of civilization.” Contrarily, the planetarization of one hegemonic civilization clones imperial modes of living which undermine the diversity needed for the resilience of—human and nonhuman—life. This is equal to the spread of a monoculture, and as such it damages the Earth and is unsustainable. The violence done to sociobiodiversity through the worldwide cloning of hegemonic civilization not only damages particular lifeforms and lifeways, but weakens overall socioecological resilience. Resilient ecosystems, species and cultures must cultivate diversity as a *strategy* for flexible adaptation; thus, if one “model” fails, other alternatives will survive to buttress healthy, viable lifeways in the service of life’s reproduction. The hegemonic model is structurally violent not only because of its unjust and exploitative hierarchies, or the social-ecological crises they engender, but its obliteration of the sociobiodiversity needed for resilience. These violences engender manifold social-ecological resistances now destabilizing the hegemonic civilization and counteracting its colonization of the planet.

Cloning of the hegemonic model is risky as it respects no limits, demands endless growth and needs continued expansion and colonization of the lifeworld to reproduce. Modern industrial civilization—especially its capitalist variant—requires socioecological imperialism because its drive for growth, profit, and accumulation overexploits and exhausts the labor of nature and humans in their local ecologies. Its search for ever lower human and natural resource costs makes it expansionary, normalizing the exploitation of humans and exhaustion of nature. Its expansive coloniality embeds its own contradiction as the hegemonic model cannot realize for all the aspiration of effectively globalizing an imperial mode of living. This is because a class of subordinated labor *must* exist, and the planet cannot sustain the global elites’ excesses of consumption and waste. The hegemonic model already dangerously transgresses planetary boundaries; the Earth won’t withstand its further universalization. The colonially-manufactured desire for a “Western way of life” *will* go unfulfilled; tensions, frustrations and conflicts will erupt. The coloniality of power stimulates aspirations which hegemonic barriers concomitantly frustrate—as subjugated classes are *required* to provide labor for dominant classes. These contradictions spell tension between established cores, and aspiring semi/peripheral groups.

Coloniality operates in/through discourses like the “standard of civilization,” “modernization,” “progress,” “development(alism),” “hegemonic masculinity,” and the “End of History” with its globalization of a modern-Western-liberal-capitalist-consumerist-market “democracy.” Propagated through neo/colonial ideological apparatuses these discourses have subjugated and destroyed alternative worldviews and lifeways, disseminating instead practices,

hierarchies, and power relations that enact and entrench hegemonic civilizational infrastructures. Today, dominant discourses spread through “diffusionist” processes (often with complicity from not-so-“postcolonial” elites) propagating standardized hegemonic models and reproducing the expectation that peripheral subjects ought to emulate and “catch up” with cores. This cloning of cultures is a risky global experiment supplanting diversity—the source of resilience—with a speculative investment of the human species and the planet’s fate into a single civilizational model that is unsustainable, destabilizing and unjust.

Costs of Playing Catch-Up

Playing catch-up with the North often requires the present-day rehearsal in accelerated and compressed manner of practices that have underpinned the North’s “rise” to planetary dominance—including coercive statecraft, eco/imperialism, neo/colonialism. Comparable practices, now rehearsed in “updated” forms by regimes/elites of “emerging economies,” often attempt to replicate core-like centers of accumulation/consumption/growth (e.g., BRICS megalopolises). To achieve this, emerging economies must resort to internal colonialism and/or subimperialism to compel into subjection their “own” peripheries as sources of exploitable natural and human resources.

The cloning/imitation and local entrenchment of the hegemonic civilizational model has been promoted to—purportedly—bring peripheral and semi-peripheral economies out of economic disparity, most recently through neoliberal development projects. Such projects have had opposite results, increasing inequalities left by colonialism. Since the hegemonic civilizational infrastructure has been partly constructed during direct colonialism, it has consolidated dependency structures that cannot be dismantled without destabilizing the world-system (Grosfoguel 2009). In such a world-system, core economies and semi-peripheries (1) depend on natural resources and labor from peripheries; (2) core-economies depend on peripheries and semi-peripheries for high-intensity/low-wage labor and low cost natural resources; and (3) peripheral and semi-peripheral economies depend on cores for capital (credit, investments) and manufactured commodities (Sheppard 2009).

As the hegemonic world-system triggers an ecological crisis created by its anthropocentric political-economy, the pursuit of endless accumulation and consumption confronts planetary boundaries (Foster, Clark and York 2010). Hegemonic powers increasingly depend on superstructural apparatuses that have enabled resource outflow and labor exploitation from semi/peripheries to maintain their imperial mode of living. Path-dependence commits hegemonic powers to securitize structural inequality to preserve the world division of labor and power. This prevent cores from allowing spaces for the development of aspiring semi/peripheries as this would challenge the world-system structure which maintains their privilege. The *core* of the world-system cannot be enlarged: its political-economy is already breaching planetary boundaries.

Enlargement would accelerate commodity extraction, production, consumption, and waste further destabilizing the planet, catastrophically. Development projects wedded to hegemonic civilizational values cannot open spaces for autonomous development (Sheppard 2009).

Thus, peripheral and semi-peripheral countries have two roads to “development:” (1) play the catch-up game based on Northern rules (e.g., those imposed via the global financial institutions); or (2) play the “true” catch-up game by replicating the colonial/imperial behavior underpinning the North’s rise to core-status. The first road means adopting neoliberal development projects—like Structural Adjustment Programs—entailing deregulation, privatization and liberalization, which transfers assets into circuits of globalized capital (Ahmed 2010). Countries adopting WB and IMF recommendations/programs have faced increased dependency on core-economies, and experienced slower economic growth than those distancing themselves from them (e.g., China, India). Since the 1980s, China and India displayed the strongest growth rates in the developing world. Conversely, as Ahmed states, “another 80 or so less developed countries...experienced worsening...poverty” (2010:111). China and India “accounted for 12% of total developing countries income in 1980 and 30% in 2000”; both—especially China—have rejected neoliberal policies (Chang 2008). Global economic inequality has increased since the implementation of neoliberal projects: “In 1960, the income of the 20% of the world’s population living in the richest countries was 30 times greater than that of the 20% in the poorest countries. By 1997 it was 74 times greater” (Ahmed 2010:119). Adopting the development projects promoted by hegemonic cores seems ineffective for emerging out of peripheral status.

Historically, few—if any—of the current core-economies have reached (or maintained) core-status through classical or neoclassical (neo)liberal policies, but instead have combined (neo)imperialism and protectionism until domestic markets could compete internationally; thus, “[w]hile they were imposing free trade on weaker nations through colonialism and unequal treaties, rich countries maintained...high tariffs, especially industrial tariffs” (Chang 2008:25). So, playing the catch-up game by the core’s rules means playing on an unequal field; “newcomers” are expected to obey rules established by hegemons who haven’t followed them, and to overlook historical injustices that entrenched structural inequalities.

The second road into achieving the hegemonic civilizational model is to imitate—in contemporary contexts—the *actual* practices that underpinned the North’s rise to planetary hegemony during direct and indirect colonialism and state-protectionism. Yet, such an approach meets contemporary challenges because it requires an accelerated and compressed present-day imitation of these practices, and it challenges the economic, military, and political domination of contemporary core-economies. Hence, emerging economies are forced to (re)identify or (re)create their own peripheral economies through subimperialism and/or internal colonialism so as to fuel development through increased natural resource extraction and subjugation of labor. Due to the

world-system's hegemonic structure, such approach is difficult to execute externally without amassing and employing substantial political, military and economic power. Thus, the cloning of the modern/colonial infrastructure and the creation of core-like metropolises (of accumulation/consumption/growth) requires new forms of colonialism and/or imperialism. Many "emerging countries"—e.g., BRICS—turn to either regional sub-imperialism (e.g., South Africa in Sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil in the Andes, Russia in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, China in Africa, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, South China Sea) and/or to domestic internal-colonialism (e.g., China in Ugyur territory, India in adivasi lands, or Brazil in the Amazon). This form of ecological and human subjugation is seen as more permissible since it doesn't directly challenge core economies' sphere of influence.

Hence, the rise to (semi)core status through the imitation of the *actual* historical rise of hegemony can only be executed internally or regionally if emerging economies don't want to directly challenge the world-system's power balance. Yet, such development doesn't only mean regional and/or internal subjugation, but subjugation in a condensed version where developing countries attempt to create what took current core economies 200-500 years of colonial-industrial development/modernization (Sheppard 2009; Grosfoguel 2009). In historical perspective this is crucial. Consider the relationship between oppressive totalitarian statecraft and rapid industrialization during the USSR's rise with today's BRICS. In 1931, Stalin (1976) stated: "[w]e are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must cover this distance in ten years. Either we'll succeed or we'll go under." Stalin(ism)'s rapid modernization not only entrenched crucial infrastructures of hegemonic civilization but relied on violent and totalitarian control over agriculture, urbanization, industrialization, military and culture, resulting in internal and regional/external subjugation of labor and nature through "*authoritarian* high modernism" (Scott 1998). Authoritarian modes—whether more or less violent—of internal/sub-imperialism (whether through state, corporate-market, or mixed policies) have reappeared whenever emerging economies pursuing rapid growth start relying on comparable methods, which aggravate colonially-inherited and add new oppressions, inequalities, human rights violations and environmental degradations (Ribeiro 2015). Patrick Bond warns:

[T]here are...greater dangers of BRICS playing a 'sub-imperialist' role...contributing to neoliberal regime-maintenance (especially in Africa), or...an inter-imperialist role as Russia...in the Ukraine/Crimea...[Notice the] super-exploitative relations...[as] Chinese households are torn from rural land during the...urbanization process...[T]ransferred to the international scale...China's role has been...predatory..., backed by its support to local dictators (e.g.,...Chinese

military and Zimbabwean generals conjoined...in the world's largest diamond fields, with a resulting Resource Curse as extreme as any...) (Bond 2014).

The world-system's predatory "logic" has been entrenched through a coloniality now reproduced by emerging economies' regimes/elites. The two approaches to development (hegemonically-sponsored neoliberal developmentalism vis-à-vis sub-imperialism/internal-imperialism/neo-imperialism) compared in the economic growth they stimulate show that global development is limited by the cores' interests. Moreover, the hegemonic mode of civilizational development can "succeed" only through violent transformations of local and regional landscapes and peoples into "resources." Oftentimes, aggressively developmentalist emerging economies combine both approaches, multiplying the violence. Given the continued growth of core economies and the increasing destabilization of the Earth-system, emerging economies only have two practical choices *if* they want to play the "catch-up" game with the North's imperial mode of living without clashing directly with cores: either remain dependent on the hegemonic system, or turn to internal colonialism and/or sub-imperialism.

Civilization on a Crash Course

In striving to emulate the hegemonic civilization, emerging economies face two obstacles. First, the *barriers* imposed by cores which resist challenges from subaltern states and economies on whose low-cost resources and labor their power and lifestyles depend (the "first contradiction of capitalism" writ-large). Second, the planetary *boundaries* imposed by the planet's finite carrying capacity, in an already destabilized Earth system (the "second contradiction of capitalism" writ-large). These barriers and boundaries impose limits on semi/peripheral development. They reveal the inability of the hegemonic economic system to function without unevenly exploited labor and without exhausting the planet's metabolism. Cloning the core's civilizational model is unsustainable. If this model continues expanding, it will destroy the natural and human bases for its own reproduction. Plus the socioecological resistance and blowback it provokes may overwhelm it. Understanding the unsustainability of the global economic system requires a planetary civilizational perspective that includes, yet transcends the critique of capitalism. Even if capitalism were materially deconstructed and supplanted by a less exploitative system, problems derived from other infrastructures of power (e.g., anthropocentrism) would remain. A deeper deconstruction and transformation is required.

To maintain the hegemonic civilization and its overconsumptive patterns cores and metropolitan centers *must* uphold a hierarchically divided world-system and rely on superstructural barriers to limit semi/peripheral economies from reaching core status and/or challenging power distributions. Such barriers are upheld by neoliberal governmentality, sponsored by the WB/IMF/WTO trinity, and through policy packages that have been shown to slow growth, increase

intersectional inequalities, maintain poverty, and devastate environments. Southern majorities resist and oppose the policies of international economic/financial institutions and their adoption by Southern regimes/elites. In 2000 the WB conducted a collaborative 5-year research project with Southern civil society groups. It concluded that neoliberal policies led to:

[I]ncreased current-account and trade deficits and debts; disappointing levels of economic growth, efficiency and competitiveness;...misallocation of financial and other productive resources;...‘disarticulation’ of national economies;...destruction of national productive capacity; and extensive environmental damage...[With neoliberal policies] far more intense and pervasive than...20 years ago, wealth is more highly concentrated, and opportunities are far fewer for the many who have been left behind by adjustment (quoted in Ahmed 2010:111).

Following the report’s release, the WB discarded the research, distancing itself from these collaborative practices (Ahmed 2010). This clarifies the impact of hegemonic developmentalism. It shows that many developing nations are caught in a vicious circle of dependency and underdevelopment where the adoption of neoliberal policies that comes with the acceptance of conditional loans from the IMF and WB limits development. This structure is not only upheld by financial dependency relations. International economic/financial institutions (e.g., WB/IMF/WTO), and supranational and intergovernmental economic organizations/instruments (e.g., EU, NAFTA, CAFTA, TPP) that supposedly promote equitable global/regional development are highly undemocratic, corporatized, and dominated by core economies and capitalist interests. In the WB, the US holds the largest share of 15.62%, Japan 7.8% and China 5.4%. The three most powerful countries hold four times more voting power than all of Africa (53 countries, 7.05%) (“International Bank” 2015). In the IMF the US controls 16.75% of the votes; Japan holds 6.23% (“IMF Members” 2015). The US holds close to veto-power in both. And while the WTO has a one-country-one-vote-system, power is still skewed:

[V]otes are never taken, and the organization is...run by an oligarchy [of]...rich countries... [I]n various ministerial meetings...all...important negotiations were held in...so-called Green Rooms...‘by-invitation-only’...[D]uring the 1999 Seattle meeting..., some developing country delegates who tried to get into Green Rooms without invitations were physically thrown out (Chang 2008: 36-37).

If any revisionist power among emerging economies were to consider employing non-peaceful means to challenge the hegemonic order, they’d face an equally skewed international

security order where NATO members represent 60% of global military spending (NATO 2013); US expenditures alone constitute 34% of global spending (Perlo-Freeman et.al. 2015). Further, the UN Security Council has institutionalized veto-power for the largest weapons manufacturers; four are European or Euro-American powers, three are NATO members (SIPRI 2014).

Thus, intergovernmental and supranational organizations are set up to block newcomers from reaching core status. Moreover, it is difficult to break into a global market dominated by interests associated with core states. An ensemble of preferential and free trade agreements among core-economies further complicates market entry to non-core actors (Sheppard 2009). Given this superstructural institutional apparatus, semi/peripheral economies are obstructed in pursuing development.

As continuing economic growth creates ever-larger resource demand exceeding the Earth's carrying capacity, controlling the remaining resources and preserving dependency relations becomes essential for core economies seeking to securitize an unsustainable lifeway facing planetary boundaries and global resource depletion. As depletion continues to drive natural resource costs upwards, capital "compensates" by relocating to labor markets with depressed wages and/or putting downward political-economic pressures on labor costs while demanding increased productivity. Maintaining core lifestyles aggravates labor exploitation. For example, Southern workers in export-processing zones earn unlivable wages producing commodities sold in the North at prices allowing superprofits.

Planetary boundaries further complicate the pursuit of growth for semi/peripheral economies; especially as catch-up strategies require them to extract like core-economies to emulate the imperial mode of living. As continued growth clashes with planetary boundaries neoimperialist and subimperialist strategies will likely accelerate in a scramble for rapidly dwindling resources. Both imperial market globalism and subimperial/interimperial strategies will intensify.

The structural limitations to the development of the underdeveloped show three contradictions of the hegemonic civilization: endless accumulation, consumption, and growth deplete resources, breach planetary boundaries and exhaust Earth's metabolic labor. The global propagation of the hegemonic model through coloniality widens intersectional inequalities and triggers geopolitical volatilities. Core economies rely on a world-systemic structural division of power and labor, while large emerging economies must elbow their way into an imperial lifestyle, inevitably challenging such structure. The planet, already facing ecological tipping-points, cannot sustain core imperial lifestyles; it will certainly collapse if the South fails to emancipate itself from the obsession to catch-up with the North and if it fails to resist and overcome the coloniality buttressing this obsession. Yet various powerful "emerging economies" are already failing at this, venturing instead beyond internal colonialism towards subimperialism and neoimperialism to build their own "spheres of economic influence." The hegemonic civilizational model demands such expansionism, yet because of it the

multiple crises undermining the socioecological basis for its reproduction are triggered. These contradictions *produce* “scarcities,” social-ecological resistances and conflicts that wouldn’t otherwise emerge. Consider tensions in Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Arctic where conflicts proliferate around the geopolitics/geoeconomics of food, energy, and resources strategic for development(alism). In the Arctic, for example, Nordic Rim countries and other powers like China scramble for geostrategic control over resources (oil, natural gas, minerals) and new trade/shipping routes (e.g. Northwest/Northeast passage). Consider also global land/water grabs (TNI 2103, 2014), and the “new” scramble for/recolonization of Africa (McMichael 2011).

Contemporary events resemble conditions leading to World War I, which partly resulted from conflicts over colonial control. Current neocolonial tendencies project comparable geopolitical/geoeconomic tensions. Prior to WWI, the rapid spread of modernization, industrialization and nationalism created new powerful nation-states—mainly Germany, Italy, US, Japan, and Russia. This challenged the hegemony of established European empires. Emergent economies propelled revisionist states which sought entry into the “great game” yet encountered hegemonic economic and military barriers. Through aggressive state-building and rapid industrialization/modernization, revisionist states sought to elbow their way into the colonial spheres of established powers. “New Imperialism” allowed some emergent powers (e.g., the US, Germany, Japan, Russia, Italy) to grab spacious lands and subject peoples in the service of empire and economic growth. So long as emergent powers didn’t have to elbow out established empires, conflict was averted—or deferred. But for Germany, Italy, and later Japan revisionist aspirations for parity in the interimperial order clashed with established imperial cores. Emergent economies paid dearly for late entry into a violent inter-imperial order. The era of New Imperialism temporarily deferred conflict over resource scarcities *within* Europe—scarcities created by the unsustainable political-economy of the dominant civilization; but conflict within Europe was deferred only because established and emergent powers were colonizing peoples and territories *outside* Europe. Old and new empires roamed the globe subjugating lands and peoples to serve their “imperial mode of living.” As socioecological space ran out, ecological limitations and political resistances against imperial expansion created explosive tensions, especially as German and Italian industrialization increasingly challenged the hegemonic/imperial system while the US and Japan vied over control of the Pacific. Ultimately “the imperial chicken came home to roost” as the scramble turned inwards against Europe. Like the old empires, new empires seeking to catch-up sought socioecological peripheries for labor and resource exploitation and markets to fuel growth. This anthropocentric, Eurocentric and modern-industrial civilization *required* socioecological imperialism/colonialism. Massive conflict resulted from an exploitative civilization.

Today's world-system risks a similar collision course. Consider the numerous international conflicts, land and resource grabs reflecting increased global volatility (e.g., Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Middle East energy conflicts, the Arctic scramble, land/water grabs, etc.). Possible future outcomes may be: (1) a paradigm shift and "great transition" beyond the hegemonic civilization, and/or (2) a clash if large emerging economies grow enough to challenge current hegemonies; or (3) further concentration of resources, commodities and capital, centralization of global political-economic authority, increasing planetary degradation and limitations on growth—all potentially resulting in unprecedented, long-lasting and severe global economic depression marked and potentially triggered by profound ecological degradation and widespread social instability.

The Great Transition

Contemporary crises result from the globalization of an ecologically unsustainable, socially stratifying and politically volatile model of civilization driven by endless accumulation, consumption and growth on a finite planet. Ironically, the very success in globalizing this model through the coloniality of power may provoke its autophagous self-destruction through the planetary crisis.

To explore alternatives we invoke two decolonial/postcolonial discussions. First, Inayatullah's (2013) differentiation of power relations based on claims to "exclusive knowledge" versus equitable "knowledge encounters;" second, Grosfoguel's (2009) proposal for "border thinking" in the pursuit of "transmodernities." Exclusive knowledge claims (re)produce epistemological power relations where one side claims to know the "true" logic, language, or law concerning the desirable order and working of the world. Such claims are often monological and universalist. They arrogate for the claimant an entitlement to position the self over others. Here, the claimant often believes, condescendingly, that he—more often than she—can patriarchally "lead," "bestow" upon, or "teach" others *the* "truth" (e.g., the "standard of civilization") and *the* "path" to it (e.g., through progress, modernization, industrialization, development, the market). While the claimant might consider his condescending attitude benevolent, others recognize it as paternalistic, perhaps domineering.

Exclusive knowledge claims undergird the coloniality of power, doing violence to diversity and its plural perspectives. They provoke resistance as alleged recipients often recognize that their experiences, knowledges, practices, worldviews, and even bodies are being dismissed, excluded, distorted, appropriated, subordinated and othered—that is, sub-alter(n)ed. However, where asymmetric power relations prevail, hegemonic domination complicates subaltern resistance. Still "underground arts of resistance" (Scott 1990) can be employed, including foot-dragging and mimicry (i.e., *pretending* to follow and obey but superficially). Yet exclusive knowledge claims may not be resisted by all subalterns, as some may benefit from partaking in the reproduction of purported "universal truths." This characterizes some not-so-postcolonial elites who exploit dominant

discourses in their desire to emulate hegemonic models and partake of some privileges. This perpetuates internalized coloniality, domestic colonialism, and subimperialism—yet sparks resistances.

Whenever postcolonial elites fail to look beyond the colonizers legacy and decolonize their worldviews and aspirations, they clone the very lifeways which led to their subjugation. As they strive to clone the colonizer's model and obtain recognition as "equals" within the colonizer's world, "postcolonial" elites may tragically end up relying on the very means through which established powers achieved their dominant position—however violent these may be. Gonzales (2015) notes, "[f]ar from defending the rights of their citizens, post-colonial states often pursue socially and environmentally destructive development strategies and ruthlessly repress grassroots resistance movements" (171). By giving in to the desire to emulate and achieve parity with the colonizer, these not-so-"postcolonial" elites become complicit in globalizing the same hegemonic civilizational model that wounded them. This is the same model whose attempted universalization/globalization now provokes widespread social-ecological resistance, motivating unprecedented social-ecological backlash from below and triggering "Gaia's Revenge" (Lovelock 2006). This growing resistance is the source of rich alternatives that *do* look beyond the dubious claim that the hegemonic civilization embodies the "universal truth" and aspiration for all.

As an alternative to exclusive knowledge, Inayatullah proposes decolonial "knowledge encounters" wherein anticolonial critiques of hegemonic discourses are followed by critical yet constructive encounters among diverse perspectives searching for complementary diversities *without* universalist pretensions. Dallmayr (2002) similarly calls for anti/post-hegemonic intercultural dialogues among civilizations in search for common grounds to build more just lifeways that can sustain an integrated world of reciprocal collaboration.

A more radical decolonial approach advocates pursuing "transmodernities" based on "border thinking." Here, hegemonic knowledges must be deconstructed and strategically reinterpreted from the margins through the revitalization of subjugated worldviews with a view to transcend coloniality. Yet subaltern knowledges must not be romanticized or essentialized, and should be reassessed from the margins of other worldviews—including other subjugated worldviews (e.g., feminist-indigenous engagements). Thinking critically from the margins of diverse worldviews embodies "border thinking." This can propel transmodern worlds that combine, yet *transcend* previous knowledges/practices. What is sought is *not* "universal truths"—not *the* "standard of civilization" nor *the* "correct" development path. Instead, cultivating *pluriversal* knowledges/practices built on reciprocal and complementary diversity becomes the source of epistemological wealth and socioecological resilience. Transmodern alternatives may retain some emancipatory aspirations of modernity, but must abandon its oppressive dimensions. Yet the prefiguration and enactment of non-alienating transmodernities must primarily rely on revitalizing subjugated knowledges and

reappraising subalternities in the transition towards a pluriversal planet “where many worlds fit”—one that is socially-*and*-ecologically richer, more diverse and resilient.

Postcolonial knowledge encounters, post-hegemonic inter-civilizational dialogues, and decolonial border-thinking towards transmodern projects can help nurture the “great transition” towards pluriversal lifeworlds based on healthy socioecological relations. Many such projects are underway. One, especially promising, amalgamates indigenous, agroecological, eco-feminist, and posthumanist alternatives. Ariel Salleh (2009) theorizes it as global justice through eco-sufficiency. Salleh (2012) emphasizes “metaindustrial labor,” which is a form of labor seeking to “fit” human processes within the broader demands to reproduce the metabolic vitality of Earth and all its constitutive socioecological communities. Metaindustrial labor includes socioecologically reproductive modes that nurture “metabolic value”—in contrast to productive value. Metaindustrial labor fosters “eco-sufficiency” by enacting eco-communal economies which do *not* externalize socioecological costs, nor produce socioecological debts. Metaindustrial labor characterizes indigenous peoples enacting traditional indigenous lifeways, gatherers, peasants and small farmers practicing agroecology, and people practicing reproductive and care labors—mostly women. Metaindustrial labor is most salient in the South, at the margins of capitalism. Salleh writes:

[M]eta-industrial labor denotes workers, nominally outside of capitalism, whose labor catalyzes metabolic transformations—be they peasants, gatherers, or parents....[M]etabolic value denotes...value sustained and enhanced by this kind of worker in supporting ecological integrity and the social metabolism. Meta-industrial workers translate principles learned hands-on in the material world—a vernacular epistemology, cognizant of cross-cutting synergies in living processes, and replicating...thermodynamic circuits of nature. This labor is relational, flow-oriented, and regenerative of biotic chains. Its unique rationality is a capacity for economic provisioning...that preserves metabolic value...Unlike the extractive mode of production with its...metabolic rift, this economy is eco-sufficient without externalized costs in social, ecological, or embodied debt...Where the...North has not yet appropriated local resources..., the labor of indigenous cultivators in the...South has established a...“metabolic fit” between human...and ecological growth. In using...“fit,” I am inspired by Jessie Wirrpa, an Australian Aboriginal elder...(2010:212).

For Miguel Altieri this “metabolic fit” can often be attributed to Indigenous worldviews:

For centuries the agricultures of developing countries were built upon...local resources..., local varieties and indigenous knowledge, which have nurtured biologically and genetically diverse smallholder farms with...resilience that...help[s] adjust to...changing climates, pests, and diseases. The persistence of millions of agricultural hectares under ancient, traditional management [as] raised fields, terraces, polycultures (with various crops growing in the same field), agroforestry..., etc., document a successful indigenous agricultural strategy and comprises a tribute to the “creativity” of traditional farmers...Indigenous technologies [and practices]...reflect a worldview and...understanding of our relationship to the natural world that is more realistic and...sustainable than...our Western European heritage (2009: 103-108).

Within ecosufficient modes of socioecological reproduction “the real material bottom line of any social metabolism” is its “ecological integrity” (Salleh 2010:212). Further, understanding ecological integrity results in practices that nurture “a recursive web of self-regulating matter/energy flows signified by metabolic value,” as Salleh argues (216). This understanding characterizes indigenous practices. Similar views are increasingly found also in the posthumanism underpinning postdevelopment and degrowth alternatives. There is also growing convergence between recent, ecologically-informed, scientific evidence from Western researchers, and the “traditional ecological knowledge” and practices of indigenous cultures and subsistence farmers: “Scientific evidence supports the argument that...subsistence farming and indigenous...economies in the...South are ecologically...and climate friendly” (Salleh 2012:132).

Salleh contrasts this to the “green economy” promoted by hegemonic institutions:

For two decades, the transnational capitalist class has used the UN sustainable development agenda to promote a technocratic...ecological modernization. However, the reproductive labor class of women, peasants, and indigenous peoples are advancing an alternative discourse on society and habitat...This rejects economic provisioning based on the fracture, commodification, and financialization of “eco-system services.” Instead...accords legal rights to nature as a living-subject. It advocates [indigenous] *sumak kawsay* [or *suma qamaña*], *buen vivir*, or “living well” as a guide to building low-footprint models of the humanity-nature metabolism. The World Social Forum’s...*Another Future is*

Possible, applies this... [i]n calling for a “bio-civilization,” ...[which] articulates a rationality practiced...by an...invisible meta-industrial class (2013: 144).

This proposal builds on collaborations among indigenous, ecological and (eco)feminist movements who gathered in 2010 at the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth (WPCCC), resulting in a “Draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth” and a “People’s Agreement” stating:

Humanity confronts a...dilemma: to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation, and death, or...choose...harmony with nature and respect for life. [We must] forge a new system that restores harmony with nature and...equity among human beings. We propose...the recovery, revalorization, and strengthening of the knowledge, wisdom, and ancestral practices of Indigenous Peoples..., affirmed in...“Living Well” [which entails] recognizing Mother Earth as a living being with which we have an indivisible, interdependent, complementary and spiritual relationship... [W]e must recognize Mother Earth...as the source of life... (WPCCC 2010b)

Indigenous intellectual Huanacuni (2010) summarizes Living Well as the “wisdom to...relate in conviviality with all forms of existence.” In Aymara ‘*suma qamaña*’ means “living in plenitude” through “harmony and equilibrium...with the cycles of Mother Earth, the cosmos, life, and history.” What matters is “neither ‘Man’ nor ‘Money’” but synchronization “with the rest of nature and life.” Suma qamaña can help “save humanity and the planet” by nurturing “a simple life that reduces...addiction to consumption” and fosters “an equilibrated production without ruining the environment.” Suma qamaña proceeds from non-anthropocentric communalism which cherishes sociobiodiversity through practices that regenerate socioecological cycles of reproduction based on relational and complementary reciprocities among different life-forms and lifeways. We must “complement...and share...without competing.” Thus living well, in plenitude, is *not* the same as “living better”—the latter may imply “living *better than* others” which motivates “profound competition,” promoting “egotism, disinterest for...others, individualism, thinking only of profit.” The desire to “live better than others”—whether human or non-human—leads to “exploitation,” “concentration of wealth” and power (Huanacuni 2010, non-paginated; emphasis original).

The Draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth proceeds similarly from indigenous premises promoting eco-sufficiency. For example: “we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny;”

we must “gratefully acknowledge...that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well;” moreover, “in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth.” Article 3 outlines the obligations of humans to Mother Earth, e.g., “Human beings, all States, and all public and private institutions must...respect, protect, conserve and where necessary, restore the integrity of the vital ecological cycles, processes and balances of Mother Earth” and must “promote economic systems...in harmony with Mother Earth” (WPCCC 2010b).

To conclude, we recall the manifesto *Vivir Bien como Respuesta a la Crisis Global* (Living Well in Response to the Global Crisis), which set the stage for the WPCCC. After deconstructing the planetary crisis from an indigenous perspective, it proposes reorganizing the global political-economy through indigenous principles of regenerative complementarity and non-anthropocentric communality:

[We] propose...a political economy that..., addressing...North/South... asymmetries, will defend life in the long run and...spread...the possibility and responsibility to Live Well (*Suma Qamaña*)...[I]n this political economy the world shall reciprocally share in... complementary equilibrium...global and local resources...in harmony with nature and within the limits that nature’s health and...resources...allow. Learning from nature and...its functioning as a complementary community...of diversities we...suggest three...principles for...an economy in equilibrium with Mother nature: (1) to reinsert humanity within the limits of Mother Earth’s...carrying capacity, drawing on Father Sun...as...source of energy; (2) to close all material cycles and not transport them for...long distances; (3) to respect equilibria among...diverse...species and cultures. In simple ways we can live slower in sync with cyclical time, and enter a deceleration phase...to have time for life, to care for, restore, and nurture Mother Earth..., as we should nurture plants and fruits...and to...foster personal relations with all...beings...[W]e can proceed from the experience of our...Indigenous communities to achieve the Life in Plenitude by reciprocally exchanging in complementarity...what we produce among diverse lands in different ecoregions and altitudes and among...diverse communities...at...national, continental, and global levels... (Min. Relaciones Exteriores, Bolivia 2009:154)⁶

⁶ This manifesto, authored by indigenous and social movements working with/in the Indigenous-led Bolivian government, was presented in 2010 at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

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