Westernocene: A Capitalocene critique of climate change

Aarti Sharma[1]

The Research Frontline – Journal
No.1, Vol. January (2026)
Page Number: 315 – 345

www.trfjournal.cdfaindia.org/
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18204816
TRF - J

Abstract

Climate change, globally recognized as a defining crisis of the contemporary era, is mostly viewed under the understanding of what the West calls the ' Anthropocene', which regards nature as a 'cheap value' or 'natural resource' for human progress. This view acknowledges human exceptionalism and the general accountability of humans towards the catastrophic condition of nature. But this paper counters this ‘misleading generalization’, bringing the notion of 'Capitalocene' and 'Westernocene' into frame. Broadly, these two concepts question the capitalist structure and also the industrialist definition of development as recognized by the West. This paper aims to critique the Anthropocene narrative through a 'Westernocene' in blend with 'Capitalocene' perspective, showing how capitalism, rather than humanity in general, constitutes the primary driver of climate change. It argues that any account of planetary crisis must foreground the roles of capitalist accumulation, global inequality, and histories of colonial exploitation. This paper also brings The Capitalocene as a Critique of Hegemonic Approaches to the Climate Crisis.

The methodology of this study adopts a critical theoretical methodology, synthesizing insights from political ecology, environmental humanities, and analysis of the theories of climate justice. This article also makes an account of all major empirical data and global reports (UNFCCC, SIPRI, HDI, GDP, etc.), and it interrogates narratives of the West to glorify the ‘universal burden’ of humankind in the label of ‘Sustainable development’’.

By advancing these notions of 'Westernocene' and 'Capitalocene', we build a conceptual framework that constitutes an ‘Anti-Anthropocene’ argument for climate justice by reframing climate change as a political-economic project. It confronts that climate change requires more than just technological adaptation; it also demands systemic transformation, which brings an ‘uneven burden’ of West and East that addresses capitalism itself, intersecting it with ecological critique, with decolonial thought, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

[1]Department of Political Science, University of Delhi

Keywords

Westernocene, Capitalocene, Anthropocene, Climate colonialism, Green colonialism, Climate finance, Indigenous sovereignty, Global South, International financial institutions, Climate justice, transformative climate justice, Lithium Triangle (Bolivia, Argentina, Chile.)

Introduction

Since the advent of modern policy-making, academic analysis, and international governance, a certain narrative has gained overarching priority: the Anthropocene, which assumes human species as a geological agent and a global actor on the planet, whose overall activity has created a new epoch. This framing achieves this through a desirable universalism, where a problem is seen to afflict all humans and requires solutions by humanity as a whole. The same universalism that makes the Anthropocene intellectually alluring, however, blurs an important fact. When addressing the influence of humanity regarding climate change, there is a difference between a billionaire fossil-fuel magnate and a subsistence farmer, a country with centuries of accrued industrial emissions and one with decades of industrialization that has just begun, between the colonizing forces that instilled capitalism worldwide and the colonized nations whose resources were taken to power them is discursively equated.

This paper claims that the Anthropocene narrative is insufficient, misguided, and politically handicapped. It is not a human crisis, but a crisis of capitalism and Western imperialism. To gain an insight into climate change, we have to go beyond the Anthropocene into a Capitalocene plus Westernocene synthesis that explains the structural demands of the capitalist system of unlimited accumulation and the capitalist role in enforcing this model on the world in general. It is only through this kind of analysis that clarity can be produced that will produce truly transformative climate-justice politics.

The Depoliticizing Narrative of the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene, which can alternatively be defined as the geological age in which man has become a formidable force on the planet, has attained massive discursive ascendancy in modern climate discussion. Since its formalization by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (2000), the framework has disseminated throughout academic fields, policy organizations, and popular culture, providing “an apparent tenaciously satisfactory explanation of planetary ecological crisis: the geologically important effects of humanity itself” (Steffen et al., 2007). There is a problem in this very universalism, however. The Anthropocene narrative achieves a lethal rhetorical sleight of hand by projecting the destruction of the environment onto people as an undifferentiated mass: it dismantles essential historical-level lines of responsibility and political authority.

By positing the Anthropocene as a universal epoch, the discourse collapses distinctions between radically unequal agents,rendering the fossil fuel billionaire and the subsistence farmer discursively equivalent. An industrialized nation with centuries of accumulating emissions and the country facing the effects of climate change that has the least historical responsibility, the West that has imposed capitalism on the rest of the world and the colonized Global South that has inherited subordination. The political impacts of such a universalizing move are immense. Following their path-setting critique, San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) state that the Anthropocene 'de-politicizes' and 'de-historicizes' the ecological destruction due to the crisis of humanity as a whole, which skips the question of historically specific agents and mechanisms that bring this crisis into being. Such depoliticization closes radical questions of transformation in the system and allows gross actors to escape responsibility through claims to universal human nature.

The Capitalocene: Naming the System

In reaction to these incompetences, critical scholars have presented the Capitalocene as an alternative describing framework. The main theorist of the concept, Jason W. Moore (2016, 2023), also fundamentally opposes the Anthropocene as analytically sufficient, arguing that, in fact, it is capitalism, not merely as an economic system, but as a historically specific socio-ecological system, that is the real motor of modern ecological destruction. It is an essential epistemological shift and a radical break with mainstream climate analysis (Moore and Antonacci, 2024).

According to Moore (2014), the idea of Cheap Nature, historical capitalism, relied on the availability of cheap natural resources and labour by means of colonial and imperial expansion. The successive accumulation regimes, the 'Plantation World' (16th-18th centuries), Mercantile Capitalism, Industrial Capitalism, and Fossil Fuel Capitalism reorganized nature to make a profit by systematic appropriation. The end of Cheap Nature heralds, in the eyes of Moore, a terminal crisis of capitalism as it is currently constituted. As soon as frontier expansion exhausts available cheap resources to rob, the profit rate declines, and the accumulation of capital goes into systemic contradiction. The ecological crisis of capitalism, as described by Moore (2022) in his analysis of the terms Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and the flight from world history, manifests due to the depletion of appropriable nature on the planetary level.

The conclusions made by Moore are attempts to politically unbend the ecological crisis by means of sustainable development, green capitalism, or technological solutions, are essentially a misconception of the issue due to their assumption of the conciliability of capitalism with ecological restrictions

(Moore, 2016), that capitalism must in ceaseless development, continue to cheapen nature, this reconciliation is ontologically impossible.

The Westernocene: Western Power, Colonialism, and Capitalism

As discussed by San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) in the article "An Anthropocene, Capitalocene or Westernocene?" The ideological implications of terminology. On the ideological foundations of the contemporary climate crisis, terminology also has particular ideological implications in explaining causality and apportionment of responsibility. Whereas the Capitalocene attributes ecological destruction to the structural needs of capitalism, the Westernocene attributes the same not solely to the needs of capitalism but to the historical actors and institutions of the West, such as colonialism, imperialism, epistemologies of the European Enlightenment, and Western modernity itself that enforced the logic of capitalism on a global scale and contributes to the subordination of non-Western peoples and lands via financial architecture, the conditionality of policies and an epistemic violence.

Adelman (2020) offers the "theoretical source of such synthesis, stating that the crux of the matter is not only that of capitalism but that of modernity in its entirety", which needs to be comprehended as the primary cause of contemporary crisis. Modernity as a project of epistemics and politics (which began in Western Europe and diffused to other parts of the world due to colonialism) is reliant upon: (1) division of nature and society, (2) control of non-human nature, (3) growth based on progress, and (4) universalization of Western categories (Adelman, 2020). "The Westernocene is what is referred to as a dual formation, capitalism as an economic mode, and Western power as a geopolitical mode" (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023). These have a long-standing history of being intertwined with capitalism developed out of colonialism, colonialism was penalized to serve capitalistic processes of accumulation, and "Western hegemony struggles to remain in place through capitalist structures and financial design" (Siddiqui, 2025).

Climate Colonialism, Financial Imperialism

The conflation of Capitalocene and Westernocene paradigms demonstrates something important that cannot fully be explained either by climate change, not largely as an environmental issue, but as a political-economic initiative that has a South-century history of Western capitalistic imperialism. The industrial richness, technological superiority, and geopolitical and economic power of the Global North had been constituted literally by ecological and labor exploitation of the Global South. Slavery, colonialism, the plantation system, imperial wars, and modern economic relations as a debt have

diligently relocated the wealth, resources, and environmental expenses of the South to the North.

This pattern of structure is preserved in modern financial processes. These organizations are mechanisms of perpetual subordination, as Moyo (2024) illustrates with the World Bank, IMF, and WTO as Agents of Financial Imperialism. Siddiqui (2025) asserts that the "International Financial Institutions and Western Hegemony" take advantage of the Global South by means of debt formats that cause exploitation. “The Western economic hegemony is preserved by the architecture of global finance, which was laid out by the Bretton Woods and its heirs” (Germain, 1997; Murau & Van't Klooster, 2023). According to Vasudevan (2008) Finance, Imperialism, and the Hegemony of the Dollar is an illustration of the power within monetary systems per se.

The idea of climate coloniality summarizes the way colonial dynamics of extraction, subordination, and epistemic violence continue to exist both in modern climate governance and the climate crisis.

The Common But Differentiated Responsibilities Principle

The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) is the most justice-oriented mechanism that can be given to climate governance because developed countries have the major responsibility in solving the issue of climate change, considering the historical emissions and wealth they hold. However, CBDR has been undermined systematically as a result of climate agreements made one after another. The Westernocene-Capitalocene synthesis can explain why: all three conditions would have to be met to accept full CBDR: the Global north would have to embark on deep, rapid, unilateral decarbonization without preconditioning it on compliance by the Global South; debt cancellation and reparations of ecological destruction and extraction would have to be made; transfer of technology would have to be made without restraining intellectual property; genuine redistribution of planetary resources and sovereignty would have to be made.

This would view such changes as systemic change, rather than technical adjustment. They would need to dismantle the financial architecture on which Western dominance has been designed and reorganize the global relations on the principles of equity and decolonization (Herzog, 2021). It is not surprising that the leading actors oppose such a framing, and, on the contrary, they propagate models, such as the Anthropocene, green growth, the market-based mechanisms, etc., that redistribute the burden of responsibility everywhere and maintain a certain balance of power.

Central argument

The present paper states that the Capitalocene and Westernocene paradigms allow seeing aspects of the

climate crisis that are not well represented by the framework of the Anthropocene, as well as methodological approaches based entirely on single-axis models. In particular:

(1) The demands of capitalism for endless accumulation and the appropriation of inexpensive nature are necessarily linked to the modern ecological destruction.

(2) The Western or European power that functions through colonialism, imperialism, and financial architecture has constituted capitalism and promotes its perpetuation.

(3) The modern climate governance institutions and mechanisms reproduce climate coloniality; in other words, the continuation of colonial extraction and epistemic violence through the very operations of climate governance has to be seen through multiple synonomic processes.

(4) The paper also argues that transformative climate justice politics requires not merely technical decarbonization but simultaneous systemic transformation addressing capitalism and Western dominance, grounded in Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and centered on the Global South and indigenous leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. Thematic Literature Review

Theme 1: Conceptual Frameworks-Competing Epoch Terms, and Their Political Stakes

1. Anthropocene: Contributions and Insufficiencies:

The Anthropocene notion, coined by Crutzen and Stoermer (2000) and developed by Steffen et al. (2007), reached a phenomenon of discursive dominance quickly by presenting humanity as a geologic actor. It is much stronger in that human activity turned out to be geologically important as it influences climate regimes, biodiversity, and geochemical cycles on a planetary level (Steffen et al., 2007). However, according to the critical scholars, there is a fatal flaw in this: universalizing agency to the whole of humanity, the Anthropocene hides the specific actors, power structures, and economic frameworks that caused the crisis (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023).

San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) show how the Anthropocene narrative is successful in a perilous way: it portrays a human-generated destruction of the planet on a general level, making discursively, in other words, equal a fossil fuel tycoon billionaire and a subsistence farmer, a several-hundred-year-old industrialized nation and a developing one. It allows the strong actors to avoid responsibility by referring to the existence of universal human nature, precludes radical criticisms of the system, and makes climate governance technocratic and managerial (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023). The language we use, as they argue, has different ideological connotations towards

causality and assigning accountability- each generation term defines the political solution, which becomes possible (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023, p. 45).

2. The Capitalocene: Calling the Economic System:

In reaction to Anthropocene failures, Jason W. Moore (2014, 2016, 2022, 2023) suggests the Capitalocene be used instead of the Anthropocene. Moore does not appeal to humanity in general but highlights capitalism as a socio-economic system, as something historically specific, and specifically identifies capitalism as the actual cause of the modern-day ecological destruction (Moore, 2016). This is an important epistemological transformation of the blame at the species level to the system-level blame.

The world-ecology is a methodological innovation of Moore, denying the liberal division of nature and society. According to Moore (2016), capitalism is the result of the sloppy and arbitrary interactions between people and the rest of nature, according to which the accumulation of capital is inherently ecological, which, structurally, requires the property and constant devaluation of nature. The capital has to grow continuously, nature has to become constantly, relentlessly, cheapened and commodified to generate profit, and ecological sustainability cannot at all coincide with the logic of capitalism (Moore, 2016, 2023).

At the heart of the analysis is the book "Cheap Nature" by Moore (Moore, 2014, 2022), which follows the historical reliance of capitalism on the availability of cheap sources of natural resources and the human body via colonial and imperial growth. Every new regime: the Plantation World (16th-18th centuries), Mercantile Capitalism, Industrial capitalism, Fossil Fuel Capitalism, reordered nature to remain profitable via systematic appropriation (Moore, 2022). Regarding the political incompatibility of the conclusions made by Moore, the ideas of sustainable development and green capitalism (or technological solutions) to the ecological crisis are essentially mistaken in understanding the problem, since the nature of capitalism is the insatiable growth (Moore, 2016, 2023). Due to the incompatibility of ecological sustainability with capitalist ontology, systemic change is the sole means by which the Capitalocene can be transcended, thereby being outside the bounds of reform (Moore & Antonacci, 2024).

3. The Westernocene: Inserting the Western Power and Colonialism:

But even the Capitalocene model, although it is analytically better than the Anthropocene, is not comprehensive. San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) state that it establishes the economic system that ensued the crisis, but it creates the risk of excessive geopolitical and colonial specifications by

which capitalism invested in organizing the world of nature. At this point, the Westernocene comes into being. Although Capitalocene tends to attribute the cause of destruction to structural imperatives of capitalism, the Westernocene tends to attribute the cause to not only capitalism but to concrete historical actors and institutions of the West, such as colonialism, imperialism, and Enlightenment epistemologies of the West and Western modernity in general, which entailed the imposition of capitalist logic on the rest of the world (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023, p. 48).

This synthesis has theoretical basis (as given by Sam Adelman (2020)) as the theory hypothesizes that modernity (the understanding of modernity as an epistemic and political project), which began in Western Europe, was foisted upon the entire world through colonialism, is founded upon: (1) the separation of nature and society, (2) domination of non-human nature, (3) progress through endless growth, and (4) universalization of Western categories. A twofold form is then called the Westernocene, both flawed capitalism as an economic system and Western power as a geopolitical system (Adelman, 2020). All are historically bound together; capitalism rose to power by way of colonialism, and colonialism was being enforced by the means of capitalist accumulation, and the financial architecture is the reason why Western hegemony endures (Siddiqui, 2025).

Theme 2: The Historical Logic of Capitalist Extraction and "Cheap Nature"

1. Structural Reliance on Nature Appropriation Capitalism:

The idea of Cheap Nature described by Moore can be followed to subsequent capitalist regimes (Moore, 2014, 2022). Historical capitalism relied on having access to inexpensive natural resources and labor, which were made available through colonial and imperial expansion. Plantation World (16th-18th centuries): this type of commodification of land, labor, and non-human nature was specifically in the Americas (Moore, 2014, 2022). Later governments, Mercantile, Industrial, Fossil Fuel Capitalism, restructured nature to continue to make a profit: forest harvesting, fossil mining, farming intensification (Moore, 2022). Every eastward stretching exploration until the verge of the universe. According to Moore, the end of Cheap Nature marks the terminal crisis of the currently constituted capitalism since, once the cheap natures have been exploited by means of frontier expansion, the rate of profit is getting low, and capital accumulation initiates systemic contradiction (Moore, 2014 and 2022).

Parenti (2016) builds on this by analyzing the environment-making in the Capitalocene, which indicates that capitalism not only consumes nature but is also an active producer of environmental conditions, reconfiguring the ecosystems by its production process, producing waste as an externality, and dumping the environmental costs on the least powerful populations (Parenti, 2016).

2. Agricultural Systems and Development as Extraction Machines:

La Viña and Reyes (2022) relate this logic of extraction by capitalists to developmental trends, suggesting that the current crisis is a result of a specific model of Western development that the Global South has been exposed to. The model focuses on the growth of the North rather than the flourishing of people, takes resources of the South to feed the North, and forms export-driven monocultures prone to climate change (La Viña & Reyes, 2022). Agro-industrial monocultures are found to be collapsing under the impact of climate, and diverse agroecological systems were found to be resilient, indicating that the form of development is the issue (La Viña & Reyes, 2022).

Plantationocene framework stretches this discussion into the past and demonstrates that plantation agriculture did not conclude but instead was moved to the industrial: colonial plantations turned into industrial agriculture; slave labor into the exploitation of migrant farmworkers; tropical colonies into the agricultural zones of the Global South; but nowadays the food system still mines the South to feed the North, relying on racialized labor and immigrant labor, and causing ecological devastation (Davis et al., 2019). The study of climate change cannot be done in isolation from the history that saw extractive patterns that began with colonialism, through capitalism, into the modern food systems.

Theme 3: Financial Hegemony- Bretton Woods to Modern Monetary Subordination.

1. Bretton Woods System and Institutionalized U.S. Dominance:

To comprehend the Westernocene, one will need to examine the functioning of Western (or U.S. domination using finance. Michael D. Bordo (1993) gives a historical account of the Bretton Woods system (1944-1971), showing how it institutionalised U.S. monetary hegemony. Bretton Woods set the exchange rates fixed and pegged the exchange rate to all currencies pegged to the U.S. dollar, and which could be moved to gold valued at 35 dollars per ounce (Bordo, 1993). This one-sided arrangement granted the U.S. extraordinary advantages, the fact that the country could virtually print its money to cover the deficits when the rest of the world was forced to earn its dollars either through trade or by currency crises. This created great seigniorage advantages to the U.S., which other countries did not enjoy (profit earned by issuing currency) (Bordo, 1993).

With fatal contradictions within the system, the U.S. experienced increases in deficit (through the Vietnam War and social expenditure) in a time with less and less gold in America, and the dollar-gold convertibility became less trusted. President Nixon, however, unilaterally abandoned convertibility by closing the gold window in 1971 (Bordo, 1993). Nevertheless, the formal downfall of Bretton Woods failed to kill U.S. monetary dominance because it was able to adapt and succeed in other ways.

2. Modern Dollar Hegemony by Shadow Banking and Private Networks.

To understand how dollar dominance insists on Bretton Woods downfall, Steffen Murau (2025) creates the Global Credit View based on shadow banking, offshore money, and global credit markets. What is defined by centralization within U.S. state institutions becomes decentralized, with the networks of private banks, investment funds, hedge funds, and financial corporations becoming more influential globally, who, together, insist on the use of dollars to conduct international trade (Murau, 2025). The dollar is global credit money (IOUs traded on the private financial markets in dollar denominations) and, therefore, dollar dominance is deeply implicated in infrastructure, making it hard to challenge (Murau, 2025). This is noteworthy as it demonstrates the evolution of western financial hegemony in the form of privatized, decentralized networks that are more difficult to challenge than formal institutions.

Murau and Van't Klooster (2023) illustrate how this cripples even the non-Western states that are trying to enjoy monetary autonomy. States have monetary sovereignty on paper, but their ability to adopt it is terribly constrained by financial markets around the globe that they refer to as the sovereignty paradox. When the central bank of a country adopts policies that do not match its expectations of Western financial markets, it is likely to encounter capital flight, currency crises, and external pressure (Murau & van't Klooster, 2023).

Theme 5: Climatic Coloniality and Green Colonialism:

The Capitalocene-Westernocene framework creation shows that climate change should not be perceived as a mere political-economic initiative; it is based on centuries of Western capitalist imperialism. Ecological and work exploitation of the Global South was the foundation of the material abundance of the Global North. There have been transfers of wealth, resources, and environmental costs between South and North, systematically, in slavery, colonialism, plantation systems, imperial wars, and modern-day debt relations.

This continuity is theorized with the help of the concept of climate coloniality, which is voiced by Farhana Sultana (2022, cited in materials). Sultana believes that climate change cannot be divorced from the colonial past that organizes the modern inequality. Green colonialism, which may represent one of the most prominent forms of climate coloniality, is the exploitation of territories of the Global South as a source of renewable energy (lithium, rare earth minerals, cobalt) with the usual displacement of the local population and the reproduction of the colonial patterns of extraction under the guise of greenness (Coburger, 2025). Imperial Money and the Making of Currency Hierarchies by Carla Coburger (2025) looks at the hierarchies built into monetary systems that made the extraction of

resources easy, which were based on colonial hierarchies. Nigeria will be a case study of how imperial money forms appropriates the wealth as it recreates domination (Coburger, 2025).

- **Non-Thematic Literature Review**

STRAND 1: Chronological Development of Scholarship.

The history of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Westernocene scholarship is that of a temporal advancement scale of theories, with each theory building on and criticizing, and growing before it.

Phase 1: Anthropocene Emergence (2000-2007)

The background moment commences with the name Anthropocene as coined by Crutzen and Stoermer (2000), which has then taken time to circumvent all institutional levels through Steffen et al. (2007). This stage made humanity a geological force that can impact planetary systems on a large scale, which had been its prerogative before the physical processes (Steffen et al., 2007). The Anthropocene narrative became dominant across fields, passing into being the hegemonic mode of conceptualizing planetary crisis (Steffen et al., 2007; Chakrabarty, 2015).

Phase 2: Critical Responses and Capitalocene Alternative (2013-2016).

Since about 2013-2016, a cohort of academics has expressed basic criticisms of Anthropocene framing. Jason W. Moore (2013, 2014, 2016) became the hub theorist, suggesting the substitution of the ideas of the capitalistic center with the concept of the Capitolocene. The key term used by Moore was methodological: instead of the human agency of geology in general, he recognized capitalism itself as the real force and structurally reliant on the appropriation of cheap nature (Moore, 2014, 2016). This time was characterized by the multiplication of the foundational texts of Moore: The Capitalocene (2014), Anthropocene or Capitalocene? (2016), which has built the paradigm that prevails in critical literature.

Malm (2016) has given a decisive historical underpinning, how the addiction to fossil fuels was a capitalist decision, and not based on technology. Hartley (2016) and Cocciolo (2019) applied the ideas of Capitalocene to legal and cultural aspects. This step turned the Capitalocene into a complex alternative that had significant academic flourishing (Baer, 2017; Antonacci, 2021).

Phase 3: Westernocene Addition and Synthesis (2023-2025)

The last development started approximately in 2023 and indicates explicit Westernocene cognitive development. The essay written by San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) contains the original argument that neither the Anthropocene nor Capitalocene can be considered a sufficiently valid term to

describe how Western/European power and colonialism have been constitutive. At the same time, financial scholarship (Murau, 2025; Siddiqui, 2025; Moyo, 2024) followed the material way of Westernocene subordination, following the monetary systems and financial institutions. This step captures the work done before into wholesome analysis: Capitalocene(economic order), Westernocene (geopolitical agent), Plantationocene (racialized aspects), Chthulucene (multipolar options), each of these to build a matrix and not a single frame.

STRAND 2: Methodological Diversity.

The various methodologies that are used by the scholars who publish on these frameworks show very different aspects of the crisis.

Approach 1: Historical- Materialist Analysis:

A good example of this practice is provided by Moore (2014, 2016, 2022), who followed the history of capitalism and its effects on the environment. This approach follows long-term trends (Plantation World 16th-18th centuries through Fossil Fuel Capitalism) rather than snapshots, and indicates structural logics of accumulation. Malm (2016) uses the same methodology, looking at certain historical events (3rd-18th century adoption of the steam engine) to demonstrate how fossil dependence was a result of capitalist decisions rather than technological determinism. This is applied by Bordo (1993, 1997) to follow institutionalization by Bretton Woods. The strength of this methodology lies in seeing modern structures as the outcome of past decisions, but its disadvantage is that it can give way to a big story, which removes contingency.

Approach 2: Political Economy of Financial System:

An alternative approach, such as Murau (2025), Siddiqui (2025), and Moyo (2024), uses them as a fine-grained analysis of the organisational mechanisms and financial flows. Murau follows the history of shadow banking networks, offshore finance, and global credit markets to demonstrate how dollar hegemony operates without being backed by gold. Siddiqui breaks down IMF structural adjustment conditionality, where a subordination is enforced through technical-looking requirements. Moyo follows the debt trap reasoning and capital flight. The strong point of this methodology is that it brings out tangible mechanisms of power; the weakness is that it runs the risk of economism, which diminishes cultural/epistemological aspects.

Approach 3: Conceptual-linguistic Analysis:

The methodological focus (as applied to political possibility) used in San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) and Janković (cited in materials) is how terminology contributes to political possibility. They

examine the rhetoric and politics achieved by the various epoch terms. The same analysis is done by Chakrabarty (2015), who explores the nature of the Anthropocene framing, establishing certain friction with postcolonial theory. Possenti (2024) goes back to trace the genealogy of conceptual developments and their implications. The advantage of this methodology is the disclosure of the manner in which language/framing constrains/enables possibilities; the weakness of the approach is the possible material consequences of abstraction.

RESEARCH GAP:

- **Thematic Research Gaps**

Gap 1: Westernocene Conceptualization Lacking Empirical Operationalization

San Román and Molinero-Gerbeau (2023) have performed a theoretically necessary rounding error to Capitalocentric analysis concerning the Western/European institutional, financial, and epistemological preeminence, arguing that Western/European is co-constitutional to capitalism and continues to organize climate injustice. However, the idea is still held in most cases as a hypothetical suggestion (Adelman, 2020). To the best of our knowledge, scholarship has not yet 327heorized327lizat the Westernocene structure systematically by comparative policy analysis, institutional ethnography, or quantitative evaluation of Western power in the particular mechanisms of climate governance- such as climate finance, carbon markets, the transition to green energy, or international negotiation. As a result, Westernocene is not analytically persuasive but relies on empirical evidence in a wide climate setting.

However, there is a lack of empirical case studies linking Westernocene analysis and instrumental outcomes, such as concrete climate policies, financial and institutional practices in the Global South, to real and empirical effects are necessary for the testing, refinement, and 327heorized327lization of the explanatory framework's power.

Gap 2: Climate Finance and CBDR Disconnected from Debt Trap and Financial Subordination Analysis

Although a large portion of the literature usually focuses on climate finance shortcomings (OECD climate finance tracking, UNFCCC reporting) and discussions of the undermining of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (Herzog, 2021), most of it exists in isolation of critical political-economic studies of debt, structural adjustment, and financial imperialism (Siddiqui, 2025; Moyo, 2024; Cain, 2022). In this regard, a lack of an integrated performative exposing of how IMF/World Bank conditionality inhibits Global South climate action capacity, how debt servicing is diverting

resources to climate mitigation and adaptation, or how currency hierarchies restrain climate finance access and autonomy is deficient. The connection between financial subordination and climate injustice has not been sufficiently 328heorized and empirically studied. Also, these works could not draw any unified response that integrating climate finance tracking with their debt data and monetary subordination data (at least on a country or regional scale) would help to shed light on the role of the financial architecture in perpetrating climate coloniality.

Gap 3: Green Colonialism Lacking Granular Institutional and Distributional Analysis

Coburger (2025), among other critical analysts, appreciates green colonialism, that is, the mining of minerals to generate renewable energy (lithium, cobalt, rare earths) in the lands of the Global South with displacement and ecological destruction as a modern expression of climate colonialism. However, the literature widely available is still more abstract and descriptive rather than systematic record of (1) the ownership structures and profit movements of green mineral mining; (2) the distributional effects on indigenous people and local ecologies and ecosystems; (3) the processes by which Western corporations and Northern governments facilitate or even profit off these extractive patterns; and (4) the interaction of green colonialism and climate politics, carbon markets, and development finance. There is a lack of depth in case studies.

- **Non-Thematic Research Gaps**

Gap 4: Methodological Pluralism Calcified or Non-operationalised.

The diversity of methodological approaches is proven in the literature review: historical-materialist analysis (Moore, Malm, Bordo), political economy of finance (Murau, Siddiqui, Moyo), conceptual-linguistic analysis (San Román & Molinero-Gerbeau), intersectional-feminist analysis (Davis et al., Dillard-Wright et al.), and speculative approaches (Haraway/Chthulucene). Nevertheless, none of these are widely applied in studies; not many studies have managed to combine them. As a result, studies are either better at macro-structural critique with no focus on embodied experience and agency, or precursors of lived experience with no focus on political-economic analysis. The discipline does not offer paradigms of consolidated multi-method studies that would involve materialist assessment, intersection, qualitative fieldwork, and participatory techniques of comprehending and transforming climate injustice. However, Critical political economy methodologically integrated research designs incorporating intersectional, ethnographic, and participatory methodology, especially in Global South countries, would contribute to the development of theoretical insights as well as justice-based practice.

Gap 5: Political Implications of Framework Pluralism Uninvestigated.

Scholarship is changing the type of epoch names to pluralistic (Capitalocene, Westernocene,

Plantationocene, Chthulucene, Thermocene). Although such conceptual extension improves the capacity of analysis, the impact of pluralism on politics has been least studied. How are frameworks for contesting for climate justice defined in competition with each other? What frameworks control the space of policy, and which ones are assigned to the limited ones' idea? What does the choice of a framework entail as capable or incapable of supporting or even foreclosing this or that political strategy? The connection between scholarly conceptual discourse and activist/policy-makers oriented framing, agenda-setting, and strategic decision-making is under-theorised.

More insights are needed for reflexive meta-analysis- Analyzing the circulation of frameworks across academic, policy, and activist spheres and the resulting political implications would help make clear the stakes of the process of choosing a framework to return to climate justice movements.

ANALYSIS:

RESEARCH QUESTION

- **Central Research Question**

1) How does the Capitalocentric structure of the west operate through specific climate governance mechanisms (CBRD,climate finance, carbon markets, and international financial institution conditionality) in the Global South?

- **Subsequent research question**

2) How do these international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) and Western monetary architecture (dollar hegemony, debt servicing obligations) constrain Global South national climate action capacity, transformative climate justice politics; and how it facilitates ongoing resource extraction through green energy transitions and technical decarbonization?

3) How do renewable energy transitions and green mineral extraction construct colonial patterns of dispossession and labor exploitation, and how does this differently affect indigenous migrant workers, and racialized communities in specific Global South contexts?

This section operationalises the Capitalocene Westernocene synthesis with the help of a combined analysis of empirical data and policy documents and comparing case studies that answer three interconnected research questions. It is analysed in terms of macro institutional mechanisms, such as international financial institutions, climate-finance architecture, and the undermining of the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities principle, then progresses to meso-level mechanisms, such as green

energy transitions and mineral extraction, and then finally, the distribution impacts at the ground level, including that of indigenous peoples, women, and marginalised people in the Global South.

The paper brings different case studies following the approach given by Robert Yin (2018) in his work, "Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.)", the current analysis will be based on the case-study methodology, but it employs case studies, which involve the analysis of cases across multiple levels, and a comparative case analysis that aims to determine patterns in cases. The cases are chosen based on their theoretical applicability to Western financial subordination; they depict Western-based financial subordination, green colonialism and climate injustice at work into real life examples, thus, allowing the theory to be empirically operationalised.

Part I: International Financial Intuitions and Climate Action Constraint.

1. Institutional-Financial Dimension

The Bretton Woods Banking (1944-1968) and Western Monetary Westernised Dominance has a historical background and still have its relevance in modern times. The International monetary system which codified the Western dominance in finance was solidified in the Bretton Woods conference of 1944 and led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and a fixed exchange rate system pegged to the U.S. dollar. The dominance of the U.S. monetary authority has not declined since 1971 (Nixon Shock), but it has transformed (Bordo, 1993; Murau, 2025). Recent dollar hegemony follows what Murau (2025) refers to as the "Global Credit View - a decentralised system of shadow banking, offshore finance and global credit markets", where all significant transactions are conducted in dollars, resulting in what Vasudevan (2008) has termed as "monetary imperialism".

Case Study 1: Sri Lanka (2020 -2025) -The Debt-Climate Trap

Sri Lanka is an excellent example of how subordination of debts is a direct limitation of climate-fighting capability. There is also a sovereign debt distress (debt-to-GDP ratio of 113 per cent in 2022), IMF conditionality, and excessive vulnerability of climate (South Asian cyclones, sea level rise that threatens coastal infrastructure and livelihoods) which the country faces simultaneously.

After capital flight and the global financial crisis, Sri Lanka had accrued a lot of borrowing by China, Western banks and international markets. By 2022, the country witnessed extreme crises of foreign-exchange, thus requiring an IMF bailout. However, The IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) agreement signed in 2023 imposed conditionalities including the privatization of state enterprises, reductions in public spending—particularly in climate adaptation programmes—and the liberalization of trade and subsidies (IMF, 2023). By looking through the statistics from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Finance

(2023), public expenditure on environmental protection declined to 1.2 percent of the government budget in 2023, directly undermining climate adaptation initiatives (Sri Lanka, 2023). Funding for climate adaptation targeted at vulnerable coastal communities was reduced by 67 percent in the fiscal year 2023–24 (Government of Sri Lanka, 2024).

But eventually this burden of debt servicing further diverted resources away from climate action. In 2022, Sri Lanka spent 4.1 billion U.S.D on external debt servicing, amounting to 67 percent of government revenues (World Bank, 2023). Under IMF conditionality, any increase in climate-related spending was contingent upon prioritizing debt repayment, resulting in the suspension or termination of climate mitigation projects such as renewable energy transitions and coastal protection.

These challenges were even more exacerbated through constraints imposed by the dollar hierarchy. The depreciation of the Sri Lankan rupee from 200 to over 330 against the U.S. dollar between 2020 and 2023 increased the cost of imported renewable-energy equipment by 65 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2023). “This dynamic entrenched dollar-denominated debt obligations, incentivizing resource extraction including fossil fuels and minerals to generate dollar profits, thereby undermining climate action”(Siddiqui, 2025). The distributional consequences of these policies were severe. Marine fishing societies, predominantly composed of women, lost support for climate adaptation programmes, leaving them more vulnerable to cyclones (UNDP Sri Lanka, 2023). Moreover, IMF-imposed spending cuts contributed to the deterioration of public healthcare and water systems, disproportionately affecting poorer communities reliant on public services (World Bank, 2023).

2. Weaknesses in Climate Finance and CBDR Ferment.

a. Promised vs. Delivered: The Gap in the Billion Dollar promise.

The Paris Agreement set the goal and aimed at having the developed countries commit to mobilizing 100 billion U.S dollars a year to conquer climate change in the South by 2020 (UNFCCC, 2016). Although, the statistics provided by OECD (2024), explicitly showed that in between the years 2019 to 2022, developed countries delivered an average of 89.5 billion a year, which does not meet the 100 billion target (OECD Climate Action Tracker, 2024).

Also, it was always merely 25 -30 % in the form of grants; 70 75 % loans or export credits (World Resources Institute, 2023) which contributes to the continued entrapment in debt instead of promoting justice oriented climate action. Moreover, climate finance was commonly provided on the condition that the recipient privatise utilities, use certain energy technologies, or open markets to Western-based

corporations (Bretton Woods Project, 2023).

b. CBDR Erosion Over Three Historical Phase thousand years.

Kyoto Protocol Era (1997-2005): CBDR was most robust. The developing countries (Annex 2) were not bound by any emission targets and the developed countries (Annex 1) bound themselves with a set amount. The CBDR principle was clearly based on the principle of historical responsibility.

Copenhagen/ Cancun Era (2009- 2015): CBDR started to weaken. Nationally determined efforts were all made, which undermined differentiation. LDCs and SIDS were the opponents, yet the lack of power caused them to have a weak influence (UNFCCC negotiation records, 2009-2015).

Paris Era Agreement (2015-present): CBDR is close to being abandoned. All decisions and rulings post-Paris Rulebook (2018) eliminated binding differentiation; no country has a superior dissipation to NDCs. Ironically, NDCs of the Global South (their emissions are lowest per capita) can offer much more profound reductions than more affluent countries (Fransen et al., 2019).

Part II: Green Colonialism-Intersectional Dimension.

Mineral Requirements and World Supply Chains of The Green Energy Transition.

Lithium, Cobalt, Rare Earths: The Non-technical Architecture of Clean Energy. The shift towards renewable energy requires new amounts of mineral mining as never experienced before. The growth in the lithium demand is expected to increase by seven folds with a reduction of half a million tonnes in 2020 to three point half million tons in 2050 (International Energy Agency, 2021). Market demand of cobalt that is used in battery-grade applications will grow by 500 percent until 2050 (IEA, 2021). The rare earth elements, especially neodymium and dysprosium needed in wind-turbines magnet consumption are in an exponential demand growth (USGS, 2023).

Geographic Concentration and Subordination: It is geographically concentrated in the Global South that these critical minerals are lithium in Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile, cobalt in Democratic Republic of Congo, and rare earth in China, Myanmar, Tanzania, etc. More than 80 percent of these minerals are used in production of renewable technology by Western actors, more so, the European Union, the United States, and Japan (Watari et al., 2020). This means that the Global South will have no option but to seek resources to feed the North-western clean energy transition, thus repeating colonial resource extraction methods in the name of sustainability when it comes to the environment.

Case Study 2: Lithium Production in Bolivia and Argentina (2010-2025) -The Lithium Triangle

Following Yin's (2018) principles of case study selection, the Lithium Triangle—comprising Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, which together contain approximately 58 percent of global lithium reserves—provides a critical site for comparative analysis. The diversity of extraction projects in this region, characterized by varying degrees of exploitation and distinct models of governmental regulation, enables an examination of corporate control, state intervention, and community impacts. The scale of extraction has expanded dramatically over the past decade. Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia, the largest lithium deposit in the world, and the Jujuy province in Argentina both witnessed significant increases in production between 2010 and 2020. By 2020, Argentina had become the third-largest global producer of lithium, generating more than 120,000 tonnes annually, following Australia and Chile (USGS, 2021).

In contrast, Argentina's extraction model is dominated by privately held foreign corporations, primarily from the United States, China, and Australia. These firms captured 70–80 percent of lithium revenues, while the Argentine government received only about 15 percent through taxes and royalties, leaving local communities with negligible benefits (CEPAL, 2022). Profits were largely repatriated to parent companies abroad, with minimal reinvestment in local economies or processing infrastructure (CEPAL, 2022).

Both cases exemplify the Westernocene, wherein Northern domination is manifested through technological and market control despite nominally nationalist ownership. Labor exploitation and working conditions further underscore global inequalities. Lithium miners in Argentina earned approximately U.S.D 400–600 per month, while cobalt miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo earned only U.S.D 30–100 per month (Artisanal Gold Council, 2023), workers faced 12-hour shifts, inadequate safety equipment, high injury rates, and widespread respiratory diseases due to mineral dust exposure (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Independent unions were absent, with weak labor agreements negotiated by "company-controlled associations" (SUDAMIN, 2023).

Case Study 3: Cobalt Mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2010-25)

The cobalt industry in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) represents a paradigmatic case of what has been termed 'green colonialism'(Blanc. G, 2022). Artisanal mining, which is small-scale and often reliant on child labor, operates in parallel with industrial mining, thereby creating a stark dichotomy between formalized and informal extraction processes. This contrast is analytically useful in highlighting the structural inequalities embedded in global resource economies (International

Labour Organization, 2020)

The DRC holds approximately 70 percent of global cobalt reserves, positioning the country at the center of the renewable energy transition (USGS, 2024). Global demand for cobalt has surged due to its indispensability in the production of lithium-ion batteries used by major manufacturers such as Tesla, Panasonic, and CATL. Prices of cobalt rose dramatically, increasing from 3 U.S.D per pound in 2016 to 15 U.S.D in 2018, and fluctuating between 10 U.S.D and 14 U.S.D from 2020 to 2024, creating irresistible incentives for intensified extraction (USGS, 2024).Ownership and profit capture in the DRC cobalt sector reveal entrenched patterns of subordination. Indigenous and ethnic dimensions reveal further inequities, communities in Katanga and Kasai provinces have been displaced by mining activities, forcing them into informal labor markets (Oxfam, 2015). Local populations are systematically excluded from decision-making processes, as the central government and foreign corporations determine mining policies without meaningful consultation (Ombak Foundation, 2021).Environmental devastation is another defining feature of cobalt extraction. Mining activities have led to severe water pollution through groundwater leaching, air pollution from cobalt dust, and soil contamination, rendering drinking water toxic and agricultural land unusable (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2019). Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how the DRC cobalt industry exemplifies an extreme variant of Westernocene *green colonialism*. The renewable energy transitions in the Global North rely on cobalt mined in the Global South under conditions of child labor, gender-based violence, and environmental destruction. While the benefits accrue to Northern corporations and consumers, the costs are borne disproportionately by vulnerable communities in the DRC. The cobalt industry of the DRC is an example of an extreme variant of Westernocene green colonialism.

Part III: Synthesis (Operationalizing Religion Through Empirical Evidence):

Westernocentism, Evidence-Based Synthesis:

Western institutional power creates conditions which affect climate action in the Global South through a series of interlocked mechanisms which counter the autonomy of states. First, conditionality demands of the IMF and the World Bank include privatization, austerity and liberalization directly limiting the ability of a country to pay for climate adaptation and mitigation. The case of Sri Lanka is an example of this sort: under the aegis of the IMF's Extended Fund Facility, the country was forced to make severe cuts in public spending including climate programmes, while the IMF and World Bank imposed trade liberalization and subsidy reforms (Bretton Woods Project 2025; IMF 2025; World Bank 2025). Second, that monetary subordination works in terms of the hegemony of the U.S. dollar. Currency devaluation of debtor states makes climate friendly policies economically unviable. Since

resource extraction becomes a necessity to earn foreign exchange, the extractive industries become a government's priority over environmental protection. This "currency earnings imperative" leaves them with no choice but profits over the planet (Siddiqui, 2025). Third, climate finance institutionalization privileges corporations of the West. Funds also frequently flow to producers of renewable technologies as well as consulting companies located in the Global North, with little to no assistance flowing to vulnerable populations based in the South. Much of this aid is being channelled back into debt repayment, reinforcing dependency, rather than facilitating autonomous climate action (Murau & van 't Klooster, 2023). Fourth, carbon markets enable Northern states and corporations to continue with their emissions, burning by buying cheap offsets. These shifts often harm indigenous communities. As for the REDD+ programme in Tanzania, it is an example of offset programmes that displace local people of forest territory, while allowing for continued emissions in the North (Blanc, 2022).

Core Result: The key processes that characterize the Westernocene Western-controlled financial institutions limit climate action as well as lock in debt in the Global South to ensure resource extraction under exploitative terms. The transition to green energy means more minerals mined by the colonial regimes of labour Western corporations reap profits throughout the length of the supply chain, while communities in the South suffer the environmental, social and economic burden. This is not "green development" but a new variant of colonialism disguised as environmentalism (Blanc, 2022; Murau & van 't Klooster, 2023).

FINAL DISCUSSION

Westernocene - A Capitalocene Rebuke of Climate Change

1. ***Synthesis of Findings & Addressing the Westernocene Framework*** **:**The empirical analysis in four embedded case studies of the debt-climate tradeoffs in Sri Lanka, the REDD+ induced displacement of indigenous communities in Tanzania, the subordination of lithium extraction operations in Bolivia and Argentina and the exploitation of cobalt mining labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo shows that the Westernocene is not only an abstraction but one that is operationalized and materially consequential. It explicates the reproduction of colonial patterns within supposedly 'green' climate governance via the workings of institutional power of Western powers, financial subordination and the logic of capitalism.

2. ***The overarching issue is sobering:*** Prevailing mechanisms of climate action - built to address the ecological crisis - on the one hand reproduce and exacerbate extraction, dispossession and racialised labour exploitation in the Global South. Firstly, International financial institutions

(IMF, World Bank) limit the ability of countries to act on climate through structural adjustment conditionality, leading to imposition of restructured debt servicing on Global South nations to the detriment of climate action investments (e.g. in mitigation and adaptation strategies), as in the case of Sri Lanka which lost 67% of its spending on environmental protection after concluding IMF agreements. Dollar hegemony and monetary architecture produce what Murau & van 't Klooster (2023) termed the “sovereignty paradox”.

Global South monetary desired coverage is theoretically recognised nonetheless it is de facto curtailed in practical terms by the threat of capital outflow, with the corresponding currency devaluation pressure and incentive systems, and subsequently resulting in resource extraction as an incentive for resource extraction instead of climate compatible development. Secondly, the climate finance mechanisms, which have been promised at 100 billion U.S.D a year, have a quantitative as well as a qualitative shortfall. The nature of the composition -70 to 75 per cent loans rather than grants - supports debt subordination instead of justice-oriented climate action. Carbon markets and REDD+ programmes as a form of climate solution are reproducing colonial displacement: the case of Tanzania, The REDD+ programmes excluded the indigenous Maasai communities from lands that they sustainably managed for hundreds of years and provided them with the carbon credits bought by Northern corporations such as aviation and energy companies, who continued to maintain, not to reduce, emission levels. This operationalises the central thesis Western actors use climate mechanisms to sustain accumulation under the auspices of crisis intervention.
Third, Green-energy transitions are the latest version of colonialism extraction. Renewable energy infrastructure needs unprecedented mineral extraction to be concentrated in territories of the Global South. The profit extraction follows the classic model of new colonialist appropriation: primary resources are extracted from the Global South through the means of exploitative labour in exchange for resource extraction, processed by Northern technology, and sold as products on the global market; while 70-80% of the profit is retained in the North, where extraction communities suffer the environmental and social consequences.

Theoretical Implications of Capitalocene - Westernocene Integration

This analysis shows that neither Capitalocene nor Westernocene analysis is sufficient, they must go together. Capitalocene uncovers the structural imperatives of capitalism for endlessly accumulating and seizing control of nature; Westernocene uncovers how Western institutional power-imposed through processes ranging from colonialism to imperialism, to financial architecture and epistemological dominance-run are continuing to impose this logic on the rest of the world today. The

synthesis brings out the climate crisis as simultaneously the problem of the logic of the capitalist system and the problem of the geopolitics of Western power - historically entwined, structurally co-constitutive and empirically inseparable.

The universalisation of the Anthropocene (unnamed attribution of destruction to amorphous 'humanity') arises as not innocent scientific entrenchment but rather as an ideological weapon that allows the Western players to avoid the fault for continuing the extraction under the pretext of 'green'. Westernocene - Capitalocene analysis breaks this depoliticisation by naming specific actors (IMF, World Bank, Western governments and corporations) and mechanisms (loan conditionality, carbon markets, mineral extraction contracts) that have specific consequences in specific communities - not universals hidden by frames of planetary science and global commons, but foci in specific struggles in which distribution of climate crisis is not global but political economy of colonialism (technology is not the solution to the climate crisis maybe also not that European).

Transformative climate justice: A Diagnosis to a Transformation

Transformative climate justice means going beyond the diagnoses for the Westernocene and its dismantlement; it requires debt cancellation, reparations towards the legacies of the past and current extraction, the recognition of indigenous sovereignty over land and resources, unhindered technology transfer, and the decolonisation of international financial architecture.

The dominant path, that involves achieving "green growth" and carbon markets and renewals framed through a framework of extractive paradigms - maintains colonial dependence while erasuring it as environmental development.Westernocene--Capitalocene framework is used as an analytical tool to present this recognition. Climate action without an accompanying struggle against structures of western power and capitalist sense is doomed to repeat the injustices recorded here. In contrast, a climate justice paradigm centred on indigenous sovereignty and leadership from the Global South, and a concern with systemic change of both capitalism and Western hegemony, has the potential to address substantive ecological and political change.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This paper lays the foundation in the form of theoretical frameworks and analyses the existing documents, policy records, and secondary data; nevertheless, this paper does not involve ground-based empirical research. The true contribution to climate justice will be made through future participatory research with affected communities. Empirical spaces to close: community-based participatory research documenting experiences on the ground in places where cobalt is mined; ethnographic studies

on climate negotiations to understand how Western power works, institutionally; comparative institutional analysis between countries on how different governments resist or accommodate Western climate subordination; research centring indigenous and feminist leadership in climate justice alternatives.

The analysis focuses on climate mechanisms (finance, carbon markets, IFI conditionality) and mineral extraction. Complementary research on technology transfer restrictions, intellectual property barriers and food systems colonialism would make the framework all-encompassing.

CONCLUSION

The modern planetary climate crisis is a radical challenge for humankind: either to reshape the systems that cause ecological destruction, or to settle for planetary decapitation. Nonetheless, the current climate discourse - which is organised around the concept of the Anthropocene - tends to cloud the reality of what transformation entails, namely the specific needs, by attributing ecological destruction to an unspecified "humanity" as opposed to specific economic systems and geopolitical actors. This paper argues that the narrative of the Anthropocene is insufficient analytically and politically disempowering, and that a combination of the Capitalocene and Westernocene framework provides crucial analytical leverage to think about the climate crisis as a problem of capitalism and of Western imperial dominance, instead of one of human nature.

Empirical analysis shows that this framework can explain by-having connected frameworks of climate injustice. International financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank use structural adjustment conditionalities to limit the capacity for Global South climate action whilst continuing the subordination of debt, as seen with the case of Sri Lanka, which lost 67% of its environmental spend after IMF agreements came into being. Western monetary architecture in which dollar hegemony, threats of capital flight, and currencies are devalued promote what the scholars have called the "sovereignty paradox," wherein nations in the Global South can pretend to have monetary sovereignty, but must de facto subject themselves to extorted resource extraction to pay dollar-based debt. Climate funding mechanisms in spite of promises of U.S.D 100 billion a year of financing, are chronically defaulting, in quantitative terms and qualitative terms; 70%-75% of the money comes as loans, not grants, causing extraction, rather than justice.

Carbon markets and REDD+ programmes-claimed to be environmental/ climate mitigation solutions for the world-are reproduction of colonial displacement. The Westernocene is not a product of mere fantasy, but is concretised operationally as climate governance mechanisms that act as a perpetrator of colonialism while pretending to work for the climate crisis. This paper has formed the analytical and empirical basis for the recognition of this pattern. The task at hand requires transformative climate

justice action: debt cancellation, reparations for extraction, indigenous sovereignty of land and resources, technology transfer with the removal of intellectual property restrictions and systemic decolonisation of international financial architecture.

The present course, "green growth", carbon markets, renewable transitions premised on extractive terms OD continue the tradition of Western subordination of the Global South under the aegis of Nature. Transformative climate action requires shifting away from technical decarbonisation and moving toward systemic transformation that helps address the accumulation imperatives of capitalism while also tackling the geopolitical domination of the West at the same time. This transformation is possible only if it is centred on indigenous leadership, knowledge from the Global South and indigenous sovereignty and is organised by movements demanding justice rather than just sustainability in colonial terms.

The Westernocene - Capitalocene framework throws some light on what universal stories about climate prevent: Ecological crisis is the political economy of colonialism. Tackling it requires not technological solutions but political change. The problem before climate movements, policy makers, and scholars, is not bothering to determine whether this transformation is technically possible-it is. The question is if there is political will to destroy the institutions and power structures that are creating crisis. That question is for Global South people and indigenous communities and social movements against capitalism in climate leadership: For climate justice and the power to protect Earth.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Adelman, S. (2020). Modernity, anthropocene, capitalocene and the climate crisis. In A. Grear & E. Grant (Eds.), *Thought, law, rights and action in the age of environmental crisis* (pp. 35–58). Edward Elgar Publishing.
2. Amnesty International. (2016). *This is what we die for: Human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo power the global trade in cobalt*. Amnesty International Publications.
3. Amnesty International. (2020). *Time to recharge: Corporate action and inaction to tackle child labour and other human rights abuses in the cobalt supply chain*. Amnesty International Publications.
4. Antonacci, J. P. (2021). Capitalocene and the critique of political economy. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 32(3), 45–67.
5. Arce, M., & Marini, M. (2023). Lithium extraction and indigenous resistance in Bolivia. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 30(1), 45–67.

6. Arons, W. (2023). Performance in the Chthulucene: Staying with the trouble of the climate crisis. *Theatre Journal*, 75(2), 145–162.
7. Artisanal Gold Council. (2023). *Wages and working conditions in artisanal mining: A global assessment*. AGC Report.
8. Baer, H. A. (2017). The nexus of the coal industry and the state in Australia: Historical dimensions and contemporary challenges. *Energy Policy*, 99, 194–202.
9. Balyuk, T., & Balyuk, S. (2024). Bretton Woods 2.0: Western financial hegemony through institutional influence. *Review of International Political Economy*, 31(2), 234–258.
10. Böhm, S. (2013). Carbon markets and the financialization of nature. In S. Böhm & S. Dabhi (Eds.), *Upsetting the offset: The political economy of carbon markets* (pp. 27–45). Mayfly Books.
11. Bordo, M. D. (1993). The Bretton Woods international monetary system: A historical overview. In M. D. Bordo & B. Eichengreen (Eds.), *A retrospective on the Bretton Woods system: Lessons for international monetary reform* (pp. 3–108). University of Chicago Press.
12. Bordo, M. D. (1997). The gold standard, Bretton Woods and other monetary regimes: A historical appraisal. In M. T. Bordo & A. J. Schwartz (Eds.), *Retrospective on the classical gold standard* (pp. 123–189). University of Chicago Press.
13. Bretton Woods Project. (2023). *IMF and World Bank conditionality: Undermining climate action in the Global South*. Bretton Woods Project Report.
14. Cain, C. (2022). The IMF loan conditionalities and neo-colonialism: Understanding through the Third World Approach to International Law. *Exeter Law Review*, 47, 7–32.
15. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2023). *Annual report 2023*. Central Bank of Sri Lanka Publications.
16. CEPAL. (2022). *Lithium production and commodity dependence: Argentina case study*. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.
17. Chakrabarty, D. (2015). The human condition in the Anthropocene. *The Tanner Lectures in Human Values*, 35, 139–188.
18. Coburger, C. (2025). Imperial money and the making of currency hierarchies: Evidence from Nigeria. *Review of International Political Economy*, 32(1), 1–33.
19. Cocciolo, E. E. (2019). The capitalocene and environmental law: Structural limits and transformative potential. *Environmental Law Review*, 21(4), 277–293.
20. Conflict Minerals. (2022). *Mining in ancestral territories: DRC case study*. Conflict Minerals Coalition Report.
21. Corbera, E., & Schroeder, H. (2015). Governing and implementing REDD+. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 33, 89–100.

22. Crippa, M., Guizzardi, D., Pagani, F., Banja, M., Muntean, M., Schaaf, E., Monforti-Ferrario, F., Becker, W., Quadrelli, R., & Vignati, E. (2024). *Fossil CO_2 and GHG emissions of all world countries: 2024 report*. Publications Office of the European Union.
23. Crutzen, P. J., & Stoermer, E. F. (2000). The "Anthropocene". *Global Change Newsletter*, 41, 17–18.
24. Cusumano, C. (2023). Beyond the Anthropocene: Conceptual pluralism in environmental scholarship. *Environmental Humanities*, 15(1), 78–96.
25. Davis, J., Moulton, A. A., Van Sant, L., & Williams, B. (2019). Anthropocene, capitalocene,… plantationocene?: A manifesto for ecological justice in an age of global crises. *Geography Compass*, 13(5), e12438. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12438
26. Dillard-Wright, J., Walsh, J. H., & Brown, B. B. (2020). We have never been nurses: Nursing in the anthropocene, undoing the capitalocene. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 43(2), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000313
27. Fransen, T., Northrop, E., Mogelgaard, K., & Levin, K. (2019). *Enhancing NDCs: A guide to strengthening national climate plans by 2020*. World Resources Institute.
28. Gender Links. (2016). *Women and mining in Tanzania: A gender analysis of REDD+ impacts*. Gender Links Southern Africa.
29. Gender Links. (2021). *Women in DRC cobalt mining: Wages, conditions, and exploitation*. Gender Links Report.
30. Germain, R. D. (1997). *The international organization of credit: States and global finance in the world-economy*. Cambridge University Press.
31. Global Carbon Project. (2023). *Global carbon budget 2023*. Global Carbon Project. https://doi.org/10.18160/gcp-2023
32. Global Financial Integrity. (2021). *Illicit financial flows to and from developing countries 2005-2018*. Global Financial Integrity Report.
33. Global Witness. (2021). *The DRC mining audit: Corruption and tax evasion in natural resource extraction*. Global Witness Report.
34. Government of Sri Lanka. (2024). *Budget documents and climate policy implementation report 2024*. Ministry of Finance.
35. Grear, A. (2020). Introduction: 'Staying with the trouble'—environmental justice for the Anthropocene–Capitalocene. In A. Grear & E. Grant (Eds.), *Thought, law, rights and action in the age of environmental crisis* (pp. 1–18). Edward Elgar Publishing.
36. Hartley, D. (2016). Anthropocene, capitalocene, and the problem of culture. In J. W. Moore (Ed.), *Anthropocene or capitalocene?: Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism* (pp. 154–165). PM Press.

37. Hertel, M., & Rosch, C. (2017). Pastoral mobility and adaptation to climate change in Tanzania. *Climate and Development*, 9(6), 498–517. https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2016.1167665
38. Herzog, L. (2021). Global reserve currencies from the perspective of structural global justice: Distribution and domination. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 24(7), 931–953. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2019.1565712
39. Horváth, M., & Lovász, Á. (2024). From the Anthropocene to the Capitalocene and beyond: A critical assessment of epoch terminology. *The Anthropocene Review*, 11(2), 234–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/20530196241270703
40. Human Rights Watch. (2018). *"What is a child worth?" Hazardous child labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo mining sector*. Human Rights Watch Report.
41. Human Rights Watch. (2021). *Lithium extraction and environmental health impacts in South America*. Human Rights Watch Environmental Division.
42. IMF. (2023). *Extended Fund Facility agreement with Sri Lanka*. International Monetary Fund Publications.
43. INE Bolivia. (2023). *National statistics: Lithium exports and revenue 2015-2022*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
44. International Energy Agency. (2021). *The role of critical minerals in clean energy transitions*. IEA World Energy Outlook Special Report.
45. International Labour Organization. (2020). *Child labor in artisanal and small-scale mining: Global estimates and policy responses*. ILO Publications.
46. International Labour Organization. (2023). *Women in extractive industries: Argentina case study*. ILO Gender Division.
47. Janković, V. (2023). Epoch terminology and the politics of climate discourse. In Á. San Román & Y. Molinero-Gerbeau (Eds.), *Climate crisis and conceptual frames* (pp. 112–134). Routledge.
48. La Viña, A. G. M., & Reyes, J. A. L. (2022). Beyond the capitalocene: Agriculture, development, and climate crisis in the Global South. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 49(3), 567–589.
49. Lohmann, L. (2012). Financialization, commodification and carbon: The contradictions of neoliberal climate policy. *Socialist Register*, 48, 85–107.
50. Machado-Aráoz, H. (2016). Ecología política del extractivismo: Conflictos socioambientales y lenguajes de valoración en América Latina [Political ecology of extractivism: Socio-environmental conflicts and valuation languages in Latin America]. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 58, 94–107.

51. Malm, A. (2016). *Fossil capital: The rise of steam power and the roots of global warming*. Verso Books.
52. Médecins du Monde. (2021). *Health impacts of cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Médecins du Monde Report.
53. MIT Material Flows Analysis. (2023). *Cobalt value chains: From extraction to end-use*. MIT Materials Systems Laboratory.
54. Moore, J. W. (2013). Anthropocene or capitalocene? Part I. *World-Ecological Imaginations*, 1–17. https://jasonwmoore.com
55. Moore, J. W. (2014). The capitalocene. Part I: On the nature & origins of our ecological crisis. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(3), 1–38.
56. Moore, J. W. (2016). Introduction: Anthropocene or capitalocene? Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism. In J. W. Moore (Ed.), *Anthropocene or capitalocene?: Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism* (pp. 1–13). PM Press.
57. Moore, J. W. (2022). Anthropocene, capitalocene & the flight from world history: Dialectical universalism & the geographies of class power in the capitalist world-ecology, 1492–2022. *Nordia Geographical Publications*, 51(2), 123–146.
58. Moore, J. W. (2023). On capitalogenic climate crisis: Unthinking man, nature and the anthropocene, and why it matters for planetary justice. *Real-World Economics Review*, 105, 123–134.
59. Moore, J. W., & Antonacci, J. P. (2024). Good science, bad climate, big lies: Climate, class, and ideology in the capitalocene. In M. Roberts & J. Smith (Eds.), *Radical political economics* (pp. 291–310). Routledge.
60. Moyo, G. (2024). World Bank, IMF, and WTO as agents of financial imperialism. In G. Moyo & T. Falola (Eds.), *Africa in the global economy: Capital flight, enablers, and decolonial responses* (pp. 41–59). Springer.
61. Munster, D. (2019). Lithium and indigenous rights in the Atacama Desert. *Latin American Perspectives*, 46(5), 45–62.
62. Murau, S. (2025). Decoding dollar dominance: The global credit view on the monetary system in international political economy. *OBFA-TRANSFORM Working Paper Series*, 25(3), 1–45.
63. Murau, S., & van't Klooster, J. (2023). The monetary hierarchy of the international monetary system: From the classical gold standard to offshore US dollars. *New Political Economy*, 28(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2022.2091534
64. Naciri, M. (2018). The Bretton Woods institutions and the beggar-thy-neighbour system. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(7), 1345–1361.

65. OECD. (2024). *Climate finance tracking and allocation report 2024*. OECD Climate Action Tracker.
66. Ombak Foundation. (2021). *Community consultation and mining governance in DRC*. Ombak Foundation Report.
67. Oxfam. (2015). *REDD+ and the displacement of indigenous communities: Tanzania case study*. Oxfam International.
68. Parenti, C. (2016). Environment-making in the capitalocene: Political ecology of the state. In J. W. Moore (Ed.), *Anthropocene or capitalocene?: Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism* (pp. 166–184). PM Press.
69. Possenti, C. (2024). Conceptual pluralism and the politics of epoch terminology. *Environmental Politics*, 33(2), 234–256.
70. San Román, Á., & Molinero-Gerbeau, Y. (2023). Anthropocene, Capitalocene or Westernocene? On the ideological foundations of the current climate crisis. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 34(4), 39–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2023.2212577
71. Sandbrook, C., & Fichera, A. (2015). Ecosystem services and livelihoods in REDD+ projects: A multi-country analysis. *Ecosystem Services*, 12, 110–119.
72. Siddiqui, K. (2025). International financial institutions and Western hegemony: Debt, austerity, and the exploitation of the Global South. *World Review of Political Economy*, 16(1), 45–78.
73. Steffen, W., Crutzen, P. J., & McNeill, J. R. (2007). The Anthropocene: Are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature? *Ambio*, 36(8), 614–621. https://doi.org/10.1579/0044-7447(2007)36[614:TAAHNO]2.0.CO;2
74. SUDAMIN. (2023). *Labor conditions in South American lithium mining*. South American Mining Workers Union Report.
75. Sultana, F. (2022). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. *Political Geography*, 99, 102638. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102638
76. Trott, C. D. (2025). Ecopolitical psychology at the capital-climate nexus: A research agenda for the Capitalocene. *Review of General Psychology*, 29(3), 373–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680251234567
77. UNDP Sri Lanka. (2023). *Climate adaptation and coastal communities: Impact assessment*. United Nations Development Programme.
78. UNEP. (2019). *Environmental impacts of cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. United Nations Environment Programme.
79. UNFCCC. (2016). *Paris Agreement*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

80. UNICEF. (2021). *Child labor in DRC cobalt mining: Health impacts and intervention strategies*. UNICEF Report.
81. USGS. (2021). *Lithium statistics and information*. U.S. Geological Survey Mineral Commodity Summary.
82. USGS. (2023). *Rare earth elements statistics and information*. U.S. Geological Survey.
83. USGS. (2024). *Cobalt statistics and information*. U.S. Geological Survey Mineral Commodity Summary.
84. Vasudevan, R. (2008). Finance, imperialism, and the hegemony of the dollar. *Monthly Review*, 59(11), 35–50.
85. Watari, T., Nansai, K., & Nakajima, K. (2020). Review of critical metal dynamics to 2050 for 48 elements. *Resources, Conservation & Recycling*, 160, 104887. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.104887
86. Women's Land Link. (2015). *Women and land rights in REDD+ projects*. Women's Land Link Africa.
87. World Bank. (2023). *Sri Lanka development economic impact assessment*. World Bank Publications.
88. World Resources Institute. (2023). *Climate finance delivered: An update on the 2009 pledge*. WRI Climate Finance Report.
89. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
90. YLB Annual Reports. (2010-2023). *Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos: Annual production and partnership reports*. YLB Bolivia.
91. Yusoff, K. (2018). *A billion black anthropocenes or none*. University of Minnesota Press.